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Rhythm

Every Drummer Needs It

Issue 296 | £5.99

ART BLAKEY
The jazz legend remembered

PLAY BETTER TODAY!

RHYTHM'S 5 STEPS TO DRUMMING GREATNESS

PERCUSSION SUMMIT
with Pete Lockett, Fergus Gerrand, Lea Mullen and Miles Bould

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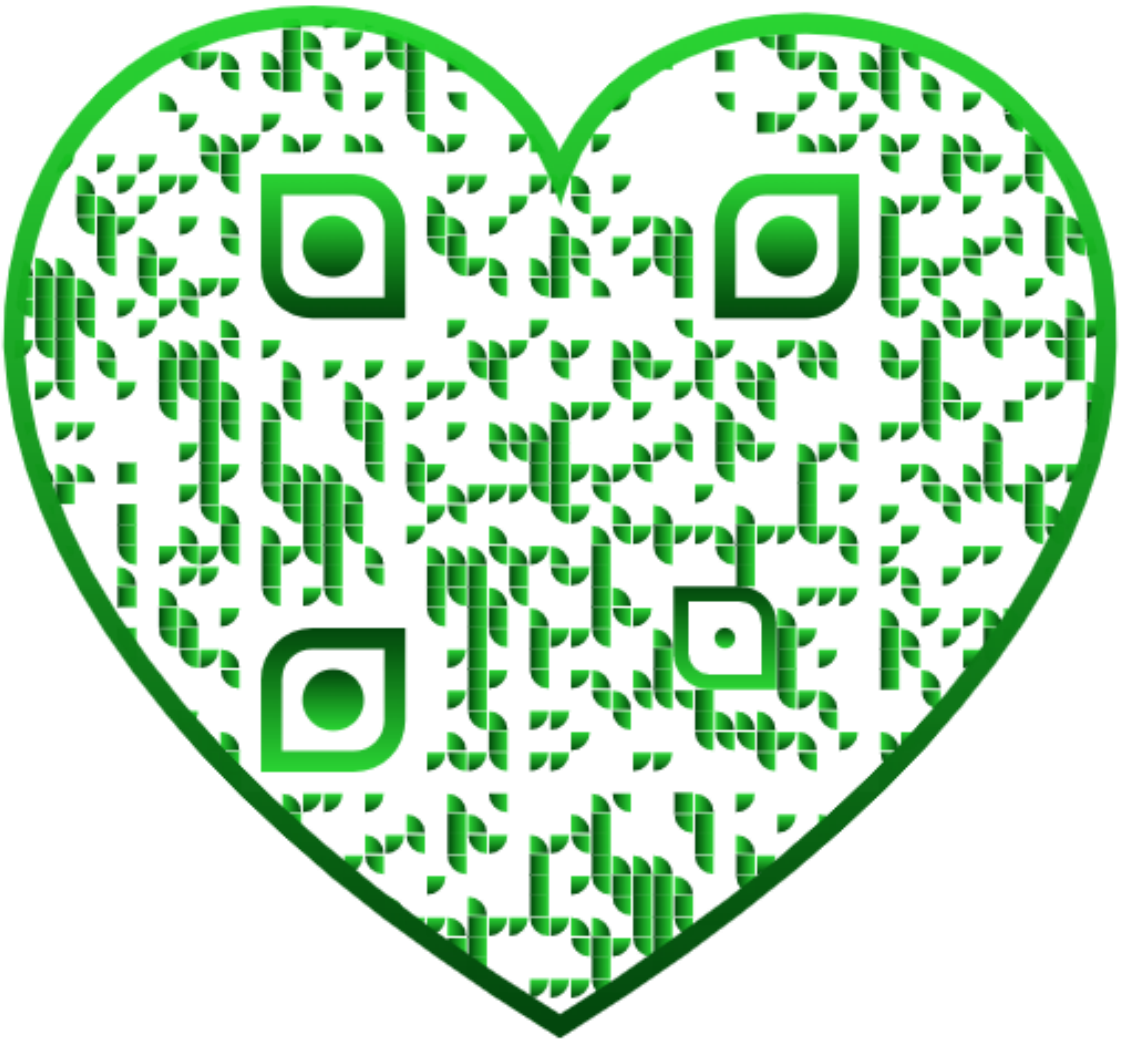

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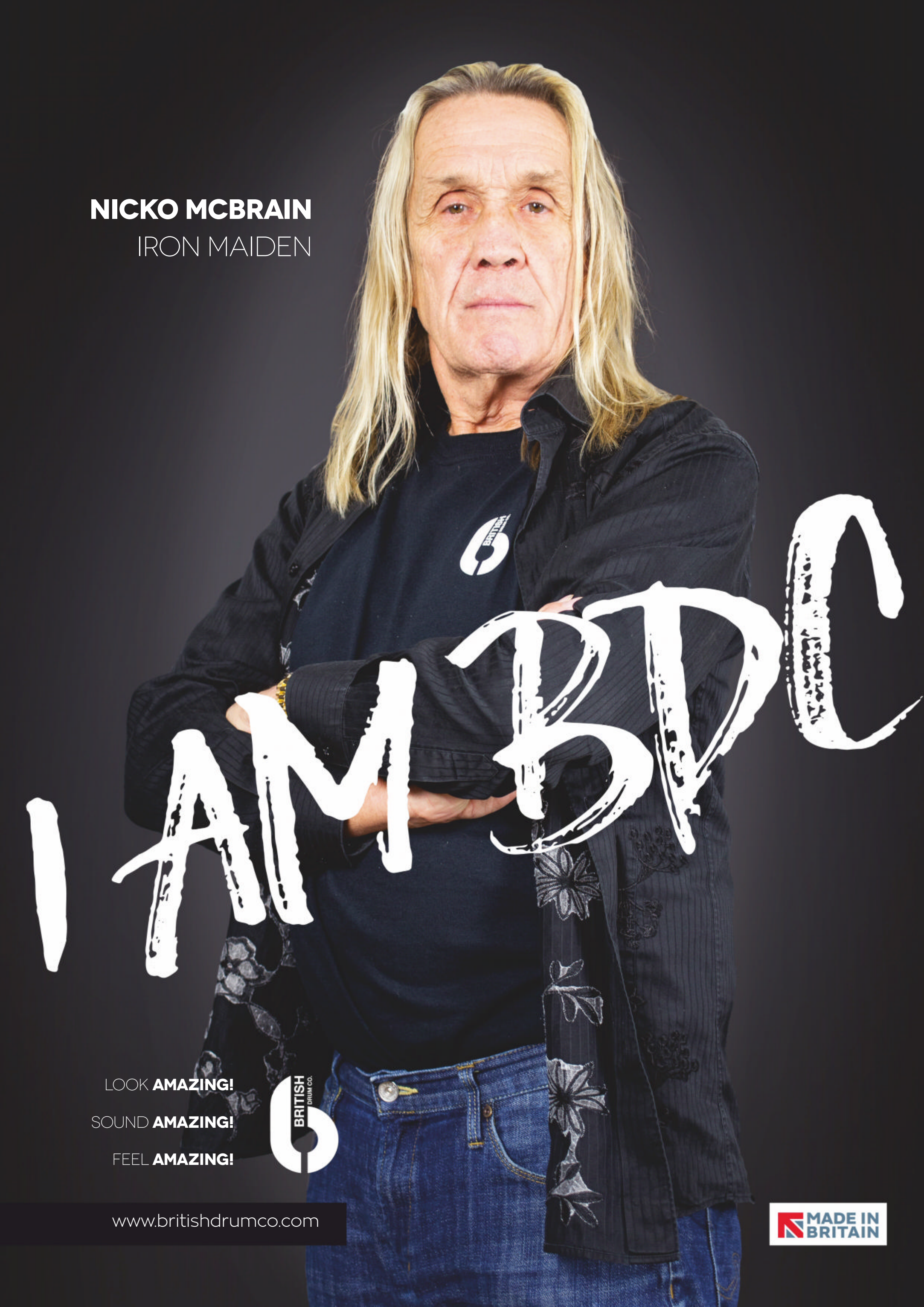
IRON MAIDEN



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HELLO AND WELCOME BACK TO RHYTHM...

In this issue, Adam Bushell – a long-time contributor to these pages, and co-founder of the WaterBear music college in Brighton – is here to help you improve your playing, with an in-depth look at five top ways to make you a better drummer. Adam had this message for our readers: "I really hope these ideas will help you progress and get closer to your goals. I've learned the importance of these five things through many years of playing music, and sharing them means you don't have to wait that long! All the best for the journey."

Also in this issue, we remember the one and only Art Blakey. With memories, tributes and personal stories from three musicians that the legendary bandleader took under his wing – Cindy Blackman Santana, Jean Toussaint and John Ramsey – we look back at the extraordinary contribution Blakey made to music, and how he changed the face of jazz and drumming forever...

Our in-depth percussion summit sees a quartet of the UK's finest – Pete Lockett, Lea Mullen, Fergus Gerrand and Miles Bould – come together for the ultimate round table discussion. From starting out and forging a career, to the studio, sessions and playing live, Pete, Lea, Fergus and Miles offer advice on all things percussion, and also treat us to an impromptu jam, which you can watch on Rhythm's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/c/Rhythmmagazine.

Also making a welcome return are Gene Hoglan, Ralph Rolle, Cherisse Osei and Neal Wilkinson who, as well as contributing some top tips and advice in our cover feature, also chooses his Six of the Best. Rainbow's 'Stargazer' – featuring Cozy Powell on drums – is John Tempesta's pick in our Tracks That Inspired A Generation. 'Stargazer' is also one of our featured play-alongs in this issue, along with The Meters' classic 'Cissy Strut'.

Hope you enjoy the issue and look forward to seeing you next time.

Louise King

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Contributing to this issue...

David West

"I still remember my first assignment for Rhythm some 16 years ago, heading out to interview Andy Strachan from The Living End armed with a handheld tape recorder and a notepad. Too many interviews to count later, I've met my heroes, like Steve Gadd and Zigaboo Modeliste, and even faced the withering gaze of Ginger Baker and lived to tell the tale. I'm thrilled that Rhythm is now back in action!"

What was your first gig?

"My first gig was in school assembly. I dropped a stick and didn't have a spare, so had to scramble around in the middle of a song. Lesson learned."

Andy Hughes

Andy Hughes has been a professional freelance music writer for more than 35 years. He has contributed to over 100 international titles, and currently writes for a number of industry and technical titles, writing about guitars, acoustic guitars, bass guitars and of course, drums. Andy has interviewed many of the world's biggest drummers and is delighted to be bringing his extensive experience to the pages of Rhythm.

What was your first gig?

"My first gig was David Bowie And The Spiders From Mars on the Ziggy Stardust tour in 1973 – the tickets were a pricey £1.50 each!"

Adam Bushell

A professional drummer for over 25 years, Adam has played for bands and artists including Freakpower, Will Young, Braund Reynolds, Martha Reeves, Sam Brown, Celtus, Public Symphony, Phil Hilborne, Richie Kotzen, José Feliciano and Jason Derulo. He's been a regular contributor to Rhythm for over 12 years. As a drum tutor, he is one of the founders of WaterBear, a new music college based in Brighton.

What was your first gig?

"Iron Maiden at the Hammersmith Odeon, Somewhere in Time tour 1985. My mum was so worried, she tried to come with me, which I managed to talk her out of!"

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Image: Jorgen Angel/Getty

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THE NEW BREED

YDOTY goes from strength to strength

It's the event that has given a leg-up to some of the drum world's brightest talents and early in 2020 the Young Drummer of the Year crowned a new winner thanks to the blistering skills of Ebenezer Sendey.

Ebenezer triumphed in a ridiculously-talented field of 10 top drummers aged 16 and under at Bromsgrove's Artrix Theatre.

Discussing the winner, show founder Mike Dolbear said: "I think the overall standard of the entries is getting higher but the top 10 has always been a very high standard. Ebenezer has been in the final before. He comes from a church background and he's used to playing in front of people and playing music he's not familiar with."

But, while Ebenezer was crowned as a worthy winner, *X Factor* on Drums this very much is not. All 10 finalists receive something that money can't buy – a support network of seasoned pros to pick the brains of as they take the first steps on their own careers.

"This event is all about giving a platform for drummers aged 16 and under," Mike continues. "The show is a support mechanism to get behind young drummers. We have drummers enter who don't have experience in the industry or any money or even their own drum kit and this show is a support for the drummer and their family."

It's fair to say that it's a format that works. You can tell that much just by looking at the almost-never-ending stream of top players who have passed

Images: Dave Hughes

through the show. Young Drummer of the Year alumni who have gone on to score illustrious gigs include Dexter Hercules (*The Voice*/Rita Ora) and Matty Brown (Stormzy).

"I get so much satisfaction going to gigs and seeing what these kids are doing," Mike beams, "well, a lot of them aren't kids anymore!"

Later this year the entries will open for the show's 20th iteration and Mike has some words of advice for those considering getting their entry in.

"If you don't make it to the final that doesn't mean you've failed, this is a journey. Look at Josh Devine, when he entered he got into the final 40 but not the final 10 and he then went on to tour with One Direction. Look at people who didn't win and have since done amazing things like Jen Ledger (Skillet), James Cassells (Asking Alexandria), Bob Hall (Catfish and the Bottlemen), Emily Dolan Davies, the list goes on."

OFFBEATS

NEIL'S NIGHT

Legendary Rush drummer Neil Peart's life will be honoured with a special concert in his hometown later this year. A Night For Neil will take place at the Meridian Centre in St Catharines, Ontario on 16th May. The show, which promises to bring with it an array of world-class musicians, will raise money for charities, including the Royal Victoria Hospital. Peart passed away in January after a battle with brain cancer.

ANIKA IN THE UK

Anika Nilles is heading back to the UK for a set of clinic dates. The online sensation will play four Meinl-backed dates, kicking off at Rattle and Drum in Derby on 31st March. Nilles will then stop off at Birmingham's PMT on 1st April, Drum Depot in Cardiff the following night and Wembley Music Centre on 3rd April.

TALKIN' JIVE

Matt Sorum is to release his autobiography this April. *Double Talkin' Jive: True Rock 'n' Roll Stories From The Drummer of Guns N' Roses, The Cult and Velvet Revolver* is set for release on 7th April and the book's blurb promises "shoot-outs, murder and never-ending decadent parties". Blimey.

GALWAYS ON MY MIND

Steve White, Marco Minnemann and Kaz Rodriguez are just three of the many stars appearing at this year's Galway Drum Show. The event, which takes place on 28th and 29th March at Galway's Clayton Hotel, includes a line-up which also features Anika Nilles, Scott Pellegrom and Clark Tracey. The event also includes the Irish Drummer of the Year competition and a huge drum expo. Visit www.thegalwaydrumshow.com.

Image: James Cumpsty

SNAPSHOT
This Moment In History

Keith Moon

"I love The Who. Just when you're working flat out and everybody's doing their job best, we look at each other and smile and exchange glances on stage when we're cooking. Yeah, that's the best time!"
(Keith Moon, 1975)

Image: Chris Morphet/Getty

Introducing

KAI HAHTO
NIGHTWISH

Finnish drum star Kai Hahto puts his stamp on Nightwish

Human. :||: Nature marks Kai Hahto's first album as a fully-fledged member of Nightwish, the reigning champions of symphonic metal. When not touring or recording, Hahto is a busy drum teacher, passing on the skills he learned after spending a summer in New York studying with Freddie Gruber and Joe Morello. "They didn't understand about metal music," he says, "but they really knew how to hit the drum so you get a good sound."

Nightwish has such a diverse style from folk instruments to symphonic metal. How do you achieve a drum sound that covers it all?

"It's like intuition. I really want the toms to resonate. I like Simon Phillips' drum sound, even though he plays with single-ply heads on his tom-toms, I like the same openness so the toms should always be musical. I try to avoid any muffling in the drums. Of course, in the kick drums you have to have a small pillow to avoid extra resonance. It's hard to find the right balance, especially because on the new album there are a lot of different things going on. At the beginning of 'Harvest' I play with mallets on the toms. I was influenced by 'I Will Remember' by Toto. If you listen to that, you'll find a similar idea in the toms, there's a melodic pattern."

Did anything on *Human. :||: Nature* challenge you as a player?

"With the new album, I expanded my drum set with five more drums. I have a second gong drum, two Octobans, one more floor tom and one 10" snare drum, so it's a fairly big kit but there's a purpose for that. I don't want to drag weight around the world because every kilo is expensive. All the drums are used in the new songs. When I heard 'Tribal' I knew I wasn't going to be able to play the stuff I wanted to play on the kit I had on the previous tour. It got me inspired to change my set-up. When we play 'Harvest', the gong drum is played on my right side, but when we play 'Tribal', the gong drum is played on my left side. It's really challenging to try to pull it off first in the studio, and then you have to do it live every night."

Where did you record the new album?

"We weren't really happy about the drum sound on the previous album because it was quite a small room and you couldn't really use much of the room microphones. The drum sound ended up being quite dull and small in my opinion. This time we went to Petrax Studio, in Hollola. That's the studio where Nightwish recorded the drums for *Dark Passion Play* where I was involved as a drum tech, tuning the drums for Jukka [Nevalainen, previous Nightwish drummer]. That's a great studio to record drums because the room is big so you can use a lot of the room mics. You can hopefully hear the difference on the new album." **David West**

Key kit: *Pearl Masterworks drums, Meinl cymbals, Evans heads, Balbex drumsticks, Roland electronics*

"...THEY REALLY KNEW HOW TO HIT THE DRUM SO YOU GET A GOOD SOUND."

Image: Timo Isoaho

Image: J Gene Ambo

Welcome back

Gene Hoglan

Testament, Dark Angel, Dethklok, sessions

Meat and Potatoes From the Atomic Clock?

Where did Testament record *Titans Of Creation*?

"We recorded the drums at the same place we did the last album, Juan Urteaga's Trident Studios. Juan is great. He's worked with Machine Head and Night Ranger, a whole bunch of Bay Area bands. On this record, I just cleared my schedule for the writing, so Eric [Peterson, guitarist] and I got together a bunch of times over about a six-month period, I'd fly up to Sacramento from San Diego and we'd start working on songs, so I was part of the sessions from the get-go. That made my recording performance feel natural. Eric always has a very definite vision for what he wants the drums to sound like, that's why my drums for Testament never sound like any of the other things I do like Death, Strapping Young Lad or Dark Angel. Eric has a definite vision, so instead of me playing a whole bunch of crazy stuff, I'm a pretty meat and potatoes player with Testament, and that's fine because it serves the song and I'm always about that."

Do you have to learn what you made in the studio before touring?

"When we track the songs, I leave the studio and even though I've tracked the drums in the current arrangement that we have, sometimes those arrangements do change. An example of this would be the latest song out on the interwebs, 'Night Of The Witch'. When I was done tracking it, the arrangement was slightly different. When I got the track later, they'd constructed this giant part at the end with a whole lot of double bass drums. That's not the way we tracked it, but I get it, the arrangement can change, thank you modern technology for allowing us that leeway. A lot of times it's like, 'Holy moly, I don't remember tracking this.' 'Yeah, because we fixed it.' I do have to go back and relearn the song. I've got to put those arrangement changes in my head because a lot of it is muscle memory. I do try to mimic the fills from the record as much as I can."

When creating fills, what's the balance between composition and improvisation?

"Well, it's a little from column A, and a little from column B. I like to take a page from the dearly departed Neil Peart. His first chorus is usually a nice little simple, solid fill, then as the next chorus comes on, he branches out a little bit. Then for the third chorus he'll do something completely different from the first two. Take it that extra step, don't do the easy thing of playing the same fill before the chorus, try to branch out and expand upon the original idea... I try to come up with something creative but not too nutty when it comes to Testament. I think you can hear the fills that happen with Testament don't usually deviate from many norms. I know what Eric's looking for, so I try to bring that right out of the gate."

David West

Out Now *Testament's Titans Of Creation comes out 3rd April 2020 on Nuclear Blast.*

NATAL

"THE DRUMS ARE BEAUTIFUL AND EVERYTHING I NEED FROM A TOURING DRUMSET"

JAMIE MORRISON.
STEREOPHONICS.

NATALDRUMS.COM

John Tempesta

'Stargazer'
Rainbow – *Rising (1976)*
Drummer: Cozy Powell

"It blew my mind. I actually borrowed my next-door neighbour's record, he lent it to me. First of all, you look at the front cover with the big rainbow and fist, wow, it just catches you. Then I flip it around and see this guy with this big Ludwig kit. This guy looks cool, man. Cozy had the look. Once that track kicked in, that drum intro just blew my mind. It's so powerful and explosive, it's like a freight train coming through and everything he does in that song is so tasty. Every fill, every lick, it's a perfect song to me.

"When I was in school I actually did an essay on the song 'Stargazer' for my class assignment, about the lyrical content. Ronnie's vocals, Cozy's drums, Ritchie Blackmore, his lead on that, that Egyptian thing, it's a magical song in every respect. Martin Birch's production on it is phenomenal, I love the drum sound, the cymbal sound is so crisp and Cozy does this one fill and he hits the cowbell, how cool is that?

"That really influenced me in playing double bass, especially looking at his drum kit, the big 26" kicks. I wanted a Yamaha Recording Series kit like Cozy. I wanted the big, super deep power toms because I'd seen the drummer from Loudness had them, but they were only available in Japan. I wound up getting a Pearl kit with 26"x24" bass drums, two-feet long, they were like wine barrels, and the kit is huge. I went 13"x13", 14"x14", with 15"x15", 16"x 16", 18"x18", two 26"x24"s and a gong bass drum. It was a huge kit. I just thought I was going out playing arenas and here I am as a teenager. The funny thing is I wound up using that drum kit on my first Exodus tour in '89. Imagine playing double bass with those 26" bass drums, it sounded good though.

"I was fortunate to play that song a few years back with the band Metal Allegiance. It was Gary Holt, Andreas Kisser from Sepultura, Jimmy Bain was on bass, Mark Osegueda the singer from Death Angel. I had to bring my big white Tama kit, I put the White Black Dots on it like Cozy. You got that thick sound out of it, that thud. I tried to emulate his drum set-up for that. It was a thrill for me because I always wanted to perform that song.

"There was a store down in the Village called Bleeker Bob's, it was a famous record store, and they had all these imports from Japan. I followed everything he did, the stuff with Gary Moore or Jeff Beck. When his solo records came out, *Over The Top* was the first one, I remember seeing that at the store, wow! He's jumping his motorcycle over his drum kit, it was the coolest thing ever. Look how cool and badass this guy is."

Learn to play Rainbow's 'Stargazer' on p.88

TRACKS THAT INSPIRED A GENERATION

★★★★★

Image: James Cumpsty

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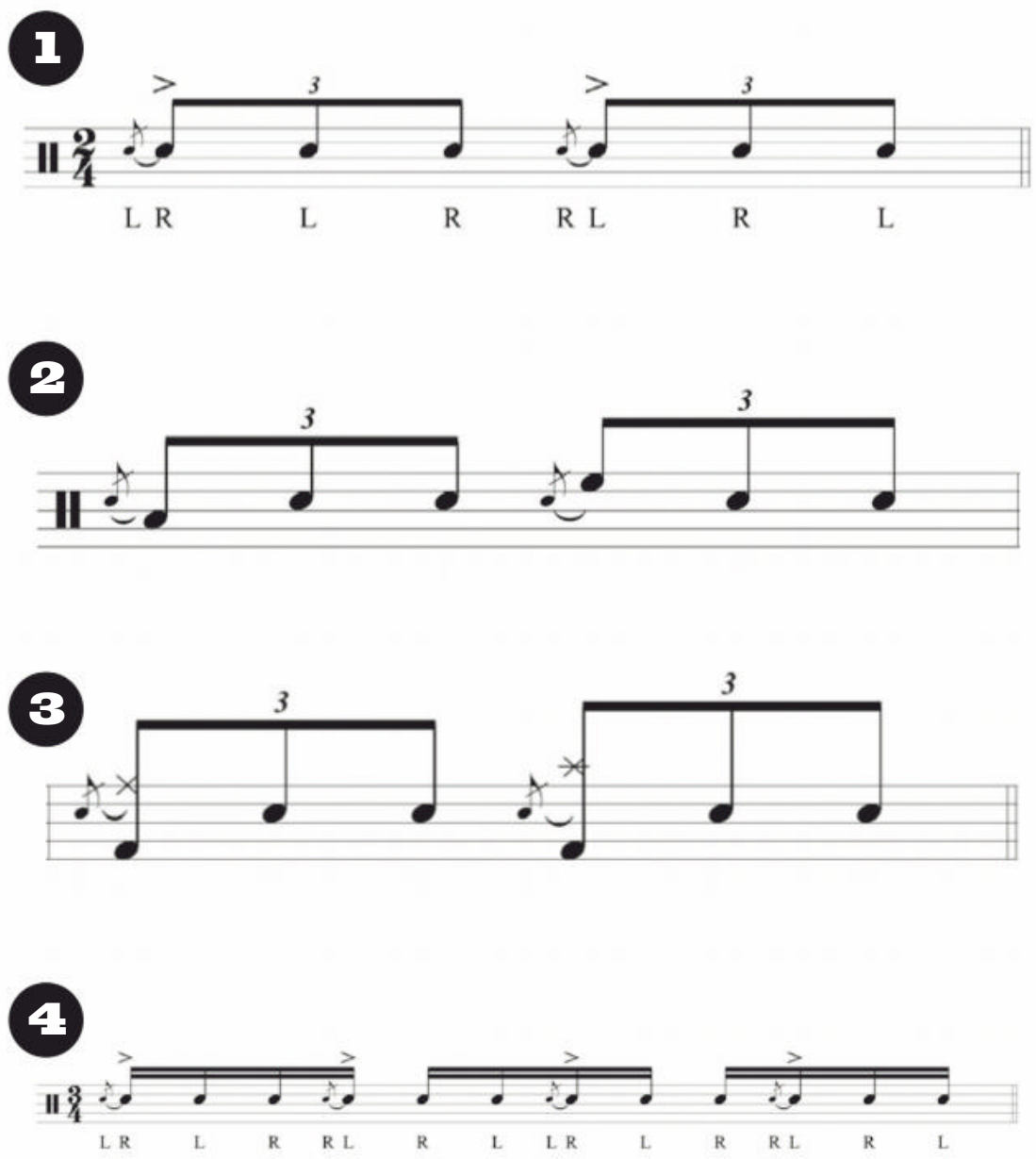
Rudiment Of The Month

Flam Accent



In this issue's Rudiment Of The Month, we continue our look at flam rudiments, this time with the flam accent. This is a single-stroke based sticking featuring a flam played every three notes which moves the flam hand to hand. Sometimes referred to as flam triplets this differs from say, a Swiss Army triplet because the flam direction changes, whereas a Swiss triplet will remain in the hand that it starts on. With this in mind, to play this rudiment accurately it's essential that the correct flam direction is played. This is most easily discerned if all of the unaccented notes (this includes the grace notes) are played from the same low height.

Example 1 shows the basic flam accent as eighth-note triplets in 2/4. In Examples 2 and 3, the accented notes are moved to the toms and cymbals respectively. Finally, Example 4 shows how the same sticking can be played moving over the beat through 16th notes.

OFFBEATS

COPELAND GETS ARTY

Stewart Copeland is the latest A-list sticksman to join forces with SceneFour for an illuminating art project. Rather than paintbrushes, Copeland used technology to capture the movement of his drumsticks to create the ten pieces in his *What Is Art?* collection. SceneFour has previously worked with the likes of Cindy Blackman Santana, José Pasillas, Chad Smith and Carl Palmer.

Image: Neil Lupin/Getty

GAVIN GIVES

Gavin Harrison has raised thousands of pounds for charity by auctioning off one of his stunning Sonor kits. The prog maestro's Sonor Designer kit was sold off to aid the MS Society UK. The lucky winning bidder shelled out £8,100. Explaining his rationale for selling the kit, Gavin said: "I'm going to auction off this beautiful Sonor drum set, with their blessing for the charity Multiple Sclerosis. My mother had multiple sclerosis for over 40 years, so it's something I'm quite familiar with."

AEROSMITH REUNITED

Joey Kramer reunited with his Aerosmith bandmates during their Las Vegas residency. Kramer had missed several shows with the Boston bad boys, including their appearance at the Grammys in February. It comes after Kramer suffered an ankle injury in 2019.

CHAD HELPS ORDINARY MAN

He may currently be back on the road with the Red Hot Chili Peppers, but Chad Smith managed to find time in his schedule to appear on the brand new Ozzy Osbourne album, *Ordinary Man*. Smith played on every track and also picked up co-writing credits throughout the well-received record.

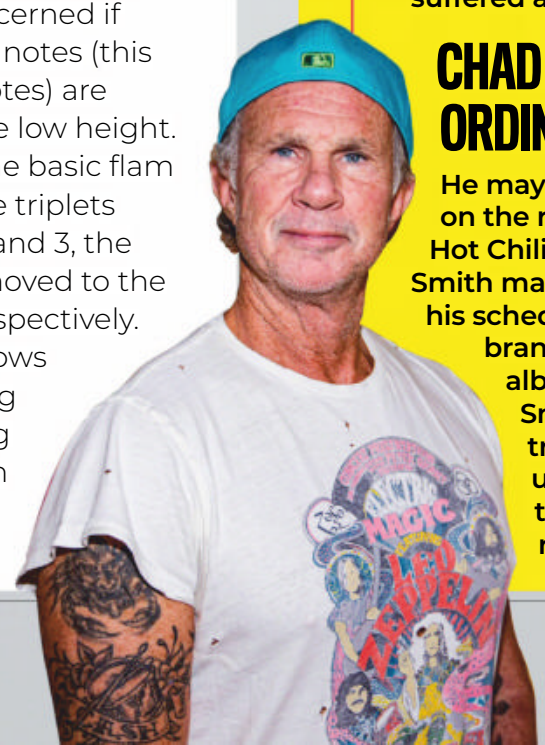


Image: Daniel Knighton/Getty

Image: James Cumpsty

THE 3 ESSENTIAL SKILLS YOU NEED TO BE A PROFESSIONAL

How to cut it in your drumming career with **Emily Dolan Davies**

So you know you want to be a professional drummer, but what skills do you need to get there?

Here are my three essential skills, that will make your foundations strong coming into the professional world of drumming.

1. Know your 'language'

This is applicable for all instrumentalists because, at the end of the day, it's how we express ourselves. This means getting your rudiments nailed, as well as exploring lots of different grooves and styles of playing.

Hone it by...

Getting into a daily practice routine of playing different rudiments to a click around the kit, with different accents, feels, and at different tempos.

You'll know you're in a good place...

When you can hear something in your head and play it, without thinking about the sticking, voicing, or placement of your notes.

2. Timing

As drummers, we are the bedrock of rhythm for the whole band to sit on. We need to support all the other musicians we are playing with. We can make them feel comfortable and safe. It's tough to take responsibility for that without good timing.

Hone it by...

Play to a click as often as humanly possible, with every exercise, groove, and at gigs.

You'll know you're in a good place...

If you notice the click 'disappears' when you play with it. This means you're bang on, and actually will take time in itself to get used to. Congratulations! You and the click are now officially friends!

3. Playing with others

To me, this is why I became a drummer. To know instinctively how to connect with other musicians on stage and 'lock-in' together is one of the most important skills of all.

Hone it by...

Playing with as many musicians in as many situations and styles as you can. Focus on locking in with other players, and making the music feel as great as possible. Equally, playing along to records and learning to gel with the musicians on the track is really beneficial.

You'll know you're in a good place...

When it feels great to you, the musicians around you are making their ugliest 'this groove is amazing' face, and the audience are nodding their heads (or maybe even dancing) because of you.

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FIRST LOOK

BRITISH DRUM CO. NICKO MCBRAIN ICARUS AND TALISMAN SIGNATURE SNARE DRUMS

Since Nicko McBrain joined forces with British Drum Company last year, the team have been beavering away developing two signature snares worthy of holding their own against the duelling guitars of heavy metal giants, Iron Maiden. The result is two stunning hand-built drums – one wood and one metal.

The Icarus is constructed using BDC's coldpress moulding process from 10-plies of oak with an outer-layer of black fishtail oak. The textured finish of the fishtail oak makes it appear similar to that of a hammered metal drum which results in a unique aesthetic. The shell features 2-ply maple re-rings which are finished in Buckingham Scarlet to contrast the black of the interior layer of oak. In addition to the 42-strand snare wires, 2.3mm triple flange hoops, Palladium lugs and Palladium strainer, the BDC logo badge displays 'Nicko' written in the distinctive Iron Maiden typeface.

The 14"x6½" drum also boasts a specially designed wing logo which references the 'Flight of Icarus' song from which the snare takes its name.

The Talisman features a 2mm aluminium shell. Seamlessly spun from British steel, the shell has a matt finish which proudly shows off the textured ridges left by the lathing process. Also named after a classic Maiden tune, The Talisman shares many attributes with its wooden counterpart. In addition to the matching 14"x6½" size, it features BDC's 42-strand snare wires, 2.3mm triple flange hoops, Palladium lugs and Palladium strainer. Like the Icarus, the Talisman also boasts its own unique and intricate logo; giving an insight into the sort of attention to detail that goes into each and every one of these drums.

According to British Drum Company, The Icarus sounds "natural, deep and warm but with a bright presence under higher tension" while the Talisman is "loud, vibrant and full of tone". To hear about these drums in more detail, keep your eyes peeled for a full review.

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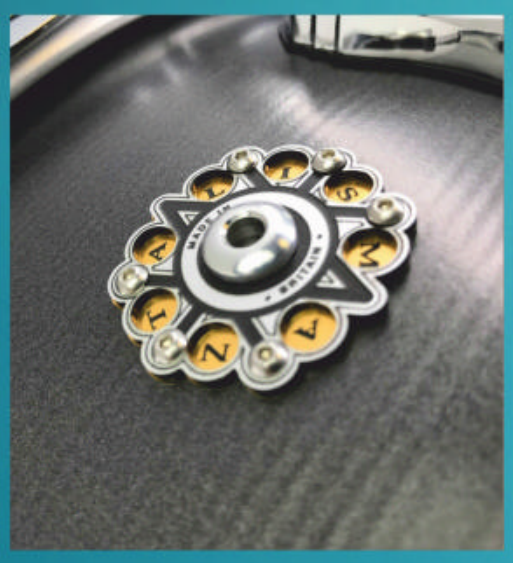

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FIRST LOOK

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2. Sonor Benny Greb Snares
Price: £645
Ten years since the release of Benny's original 13"x5¾" signature snare, Sonor releases a 1.2mm brass model and an upgraded 9-ply beech wood model in the same configuration. Both drums feature a 'monorail' dual internal dampening system. One of which is felt (aptly named 'the felt') and the other a synthetic wool dampener called 'the sheep'.
www.sonor.com

3. Sabian Graphic Cymbals
Price: £TBC
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www.sabian.com

4. Roland VAD306
Price: £2199
The smallest of Roland's new V-Drums Acoustic Design kits, the 306 features an 18"x9½" bass drum, 10"x4½" rack toms and 12"x4½" snare and floor tom. This more affordable configuration is powered by the TD-17 module and uses shallower wooden shells.
www.roland.com/uk

5. Pearl Solo Eliminator
Price: TBC
The Pearl Eliminator is known for its high level of customisation, due in part to a clever interchangeable cam system. The Solo represents a more affordable option and is available in two models. The black cam is round for a smooth linear action while the red cam is angled for an accelerated stroke.
www.pearleurope.com

6. Tama Sizzle Touch Drop Clutch
Price: £42.99
This fine-tuneable drop clutch allows the gap between the top and bottom cymbals to be adjusted while in the dropped position – allowing the ideal hi-hat tone to be dialled in while using a double bass pedal.
www.tama.com

7. PDP Concept Select Snares
Price: TBC
This collection of metal snares from DW's sister company are available in aluminium, bell bronze and steel options. Each shell is 3mm thick and 14"x6½". All are supplied with True-Pitch tension rods, DW mag throw-offs and laser engraved PDP badges.
www.pacificdrums.com

4
5
6
7
Pearl
NATAL
pdp
CONCEPT SELECT

Vintage
CIRCA 1944

LUDWIG AND LUDWIG VICTORY KIT

Brought over to the UK from Chicago during the build-up to D-Day, this rare kit put the swing in the GI's life

Writer: **Geoff Nicholls** | Images: **James Cumpsty**

One of the strangest interludes in drumset history occurred during the Second World War as a result of the USA War Production Board's 'Controlled Materials Plan'. This stipulated that no more than 10 percent weight of 'critical materials' could be used in the manufacture of non-essential items. As explained by W. F. Ludwig himself (in 'The Ludwig Book', by Rob Cook), Directive L-37 limited the use of critical materials to 10 percent by weight of the instrument. This largely meant metals, and at first that seemed to spell the suspension of drum production. But Ludwig's chief engineer, Cecil Strupe, quickly redesigned Ludwig's drums to accommodate this.

The result was kits like the Ludwig Victory, seen here, with its oversized toy drum appearance. The kit belongs to Alan 'Sticky' Wicket, who says, "Apart from being visually intriguing it's also intriguing to play. It doesn't sound like a Ludwig that we would know and love, but it has great charm and I enjoyed playing it on 'Next Level Chops'." (See www.youtube.com/watch?v=puUFVFLJya0 or search for War Time Ludwig Victory Drum Kit - Sticky Wicket.)

"The shells are stamped inside with dates from early 1944 and are all three-ply maple-poplar-maple. Sizes are 26"x14" bass drum, 15"x13" floor tom, 11"x7" mounted tom and 14"x7" snare. The kit was painted black at some point but was later stripped back to the natural wood. All the drums have what appear to be the original calfskin heads.

"The solid maple lugs have regular spring-loaded steel nut boxes within." The thick hoops are also made from solid maple and the tension rods pass through them, "eliminating the need for metal hoop claws. Therefore the only metal components originally were the nut boxes, tension rods, strainer, badges and screws.

"Stands and pedals were also made from wood. Pedals and toms were attached to mounting rails as seen on the bass drum here. However, this rail is taken from a Gretsch 'Bomber' kit of the same style and vintage."

There should also be a wooden mounting bracket for the small tom, but this is missing and Sticks has substituted a Slingerland metal one. Sticks explains, "All the fittings and stands were missing; I acquired only the basic shells. In addition to the above, I've added newly-made wooden folding bass drum spurs, a metal snare stand and floor tom cradle".

Sticky further reveals that "I'm told the kit was purchased in the UK from a US military base in Cornwall sometime after the war when the Americans had left. It would have been used by the troops to make their own swing music during the run-up to D-Day in June 1944. It was not uncommon for the US military to leave equipment behind after WW2, as it was often not cost-effective to ship it home".

Simon John's Vintage Drum Show

IN ASSOCIATION WITH:
SIMON JOHN'S VINTAGE DRUM SHOW
www.vintagedrums.co.uk

1. METAL TOM BRACKET
Ludwig even made a wooden tom bracket, but this has been lost and replaced by a period Slingerland metal one.

2. BASIC SNARE STRAINER
More metal savings are made by employing the most basic of thumb-screw snare strainers.

3. SOLID WOOD TENSION LUGS
Wherever possible metal parts were swapped for solid wood as in the tension lugs and hoops.

WOODEN MOUNTING RAILS

Mounting hardware was replaced by wooden versions, some of which are missing, hence the replacement metal tom mount and floor tom tripod..

TACKED-ON BOTTOM HEADS

Although double-headed toms were common by the 1940s the Victory again saves on materials with its tacked-on bottom heads of pigskin.

NATURAL MAPLE

The Victory kit has three-ply maple shells with solid maple fittings, originally painted black.

NEED TO KNOW

10 PERCENT LAW
The USA's commitment to WW2 resulted in restrictions on metal components of non-essential items to 10 percent by weight.

LUDWIG AND LUDWIG
Started in 1909, the Ludwig brothers William and Theobald were based in Chicago where this kit was made.

STICKY WICKET
Sticks is building a considerable new following with his unique vintage kits and vintage styles video series on the 'Next level Chops' YouTube channel.

"THE KIT WAS PURCHASED FROM **A US MILITARY BASE IN CORNWALL** SOMETIME AFTER **WW2 WHEN THE AMERICANS HAD LEFT**"

OWNER, ALAN 'STICKY' WICKET.

5 STEPS TO GREATNESS

So, you want to get good? Really good? Great even? It's a new decade and what better way to start than with a firm commitment to being the best you can be and five vital steps from one of the country's leading drum tutors, Adam Bushell. So, next question: where to start? It may at first seem blindingly obvious that to get good at drumming, extra hours practising is the way to do it. However, there's so much more to being a great musician than the pursuit of technical proficiency and for we drummers, the butt of musician-based jokes, there is an even greater need to look beyond hours spent in the practice room...

1 LISTEN TO THE MUSIC

As the Doobie Brothers famously once said, "(Woah) listen to the music"! And frankly, there is no better advice, if making music is your thing. The drum kit is a supporting instrument and the very reason for its existence is to support and enhance the music. Drumming for drumming's sake is fine and for many, a very enjoyable thing to do, but to be considered as really great on the instrument, especially to the ears of non-drummers (those in the band, the audience, etc.) you'll need to develop a clear understanding of what the drums should be doing in the context of the ensemble. Legendary Jazz pianist Chick Corea said of the great Steve Gadd that "Every drummer wants to play like Gadd because Gadd plays perfect". Make no mistake, this comment wasn't relating to how crisp Mr Gadd's paradiddles are or his single stroke speed or, put another way, the virtues of his technical proficiency. This was an acknowledgement of the fact that Steve Gadd knows just what to play and executes it so well, that it equates to musical perfection. In other words, Gadd's drumming makes the drums do what they were designed to do, perfectly.

Playing the 'right' thing

That's all well and good and Steve Gadd is, well, Steve Gadd. But how do we know what to play? The UK drumming great Neal Wilkinson (see p.35) was once asked this very question at a clinic. His response? By getting it wrong so many times before! The implication here is the importance of learning from one's many mistakes to the point of knowing what is 'right'. But even before that, there is another thing so essential that without doing it you can forget all notions of becoming a great musician. It is this: you must listen to music! And I mean really listen. Don't just listen to music as a backdrop to another, primary activity. Spend time listening, studying, absorbing and trying to get to grips with the essence of what is being expressed. Today, music has never been more accessible and the days of ordering rare cuts from the library, waiting for imports or 'taping' music from the radio are long gone. Music is now instantly accessible via digital streaming and, regardless of your views on this, there is no excuse not to listen to and absorb music. In the context of our aim to become great at drumming, it is the best way to understand what the drums are for and what they should be doing.

Understanding what you should play in whatever musical context you find yourself in will be down in no small part to how much of that musical style you have listened to. Don't for one second think that you have come to change the course of music and your goal is to, therefore, play something different to all that has gone before. The band leader will not thank you for it and you'll probably lose the gig. Clichéd as it sounds, always remember that we are standing on the shoulders of musical giants and the fact that great music of bygone years has stood the test of time and is still great, is because it is also right. Always strive to play the right thing, because that is the thing that works. The music will feel better for it and, if you are making the music feel better, then you're doing your job.

Be inspired!

Listening to great music should be a daily activity. The discovery of brilliant new music and those fantastic musicians who created it can be truly inspirational. No matter what the style, there are those seminal recordings and players that best represent it. The more you listen and absorb, the more ideas will find their way into your own playing, which in turn will hone your own, musical voice. And, just as importantly, you will come to know the must-dos associated with each style and what you should (and shouldn't) be playing.

The great Vinnie Colaiuta speaks of his 'mental Rolodex', a data bank so full of musical reference points that when faced with any musical situation, his brain can scan the information in an instant and come up with something he knows will work. The point here is that he is drawing on years of experience and prior musical references and situations to create the right part. Nothing is new. This ability is borne out of years of listening to, absorbing, understanding and playing music.

So, always remember what it's all about – the music. It's the thing that will be there long after you and I are no more, and the reason we do what we do. You are more than just a drummer – you are a musician. So listen to the music!

It all began with Bonham for Simple Mind's drummer...

Cherisse Osei

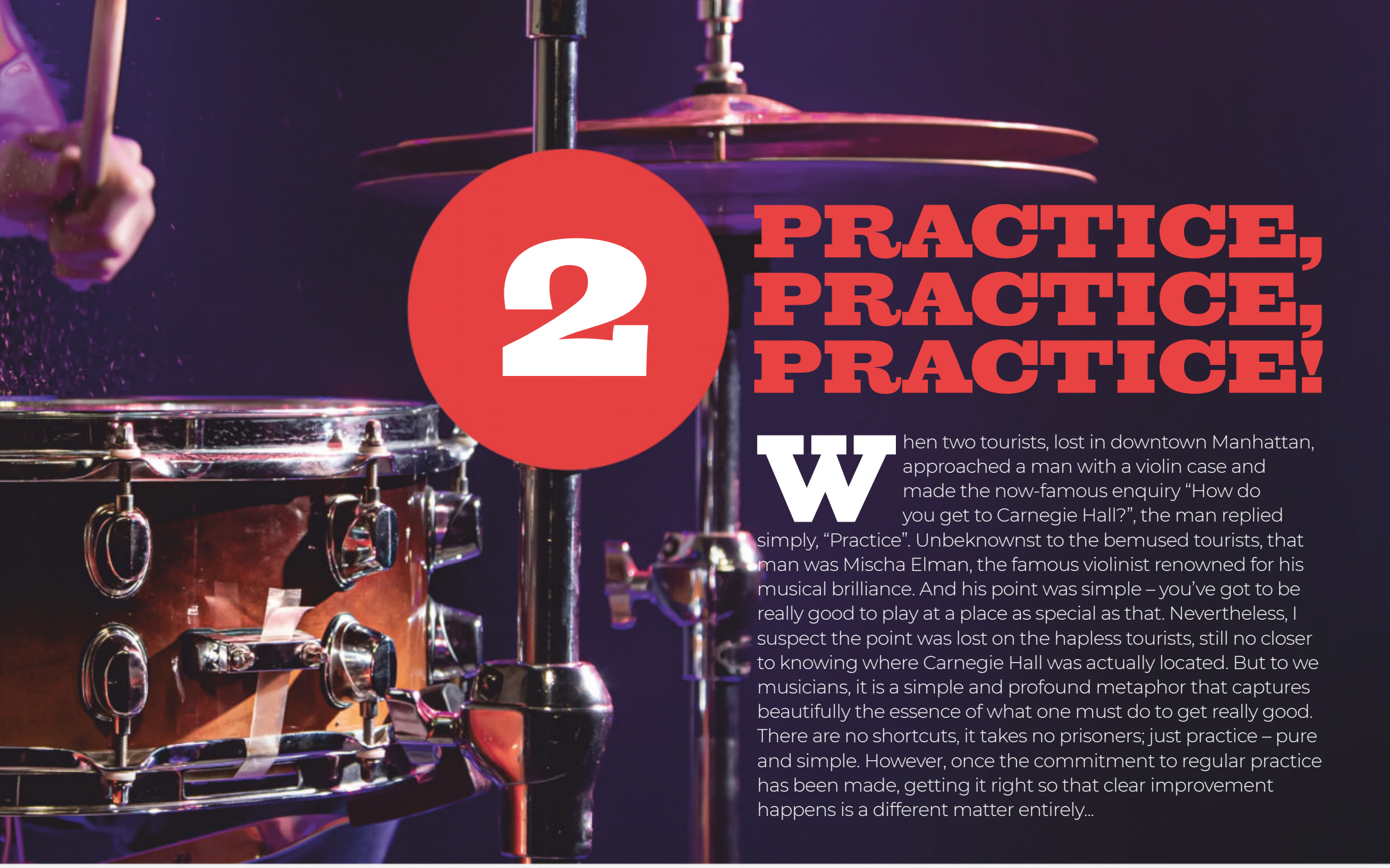
Image: The Parietal Eye

"I grew up listening to my parents' music, which was jazz and funk and Miles Davis from my dad, and The Beatles, Fleetwood Mac and Van Morrison from my mum. As a teenager I got into rock, Incubus, System Of A Down, Queens Of The Stone Age, and in my twenties I went into hip hop and soul, A Tribe Called Quest, Public Enemy and so on. You learn styles by listening, and then you learn to put your own personal stamp and sound on those styles. John Bonham was the player who made me want to be a drummer. The thing is, any drum teacher will tell you about listening to as much varied music as you can, but it's something that is easy to ignore. You listen to enjoy the music you like but this is different, you have to zero in on specific areas of music, and not just the drums. You need to hear how the bass and drums interact, how the guitars lay over the top, and how the drums hold everything together. That's what you need to learn, because it is very different in any musical style, so you need to hear them and understand them properly, really listen closely.

"You should always aim to play with as many musicians as you can. It helps you to learn to fit in with other players on stage or in a studio in a way that you can never master just playing on your own, or playing along to tracks in your bedroom. When you are learning, you do have lessons and then practise on your own, and you get used to that, and it's easy to think that this is the way you will always learn. It's not. Playing drums is about working with other people, the drums are an accompanying instrument, it's what you do as a drummer. I have played with a lot of different musicians with some very, very different styles of music, and that has been really good for me as a musician. You always learn something new every time you step into a studio, or a rehearsal room, or on stage, even if it is with a band you've been with for a while. You need to be open and reacting to what the others are doing. Feel the dynamic, and as a drummer you should be helping to drive it as well, it's important to be part of what is going on around you.

"Staying positive is essential. If I make a mistake, I'll put my hand up and say "Yes, it was me, I came in at the wrong time," or played the wrong fill and threw everyone off. On tour with Simple Minds, we finished the set with 'New Gold Dream' for 10 shows in a row, then they changed the last song, so next gig, I said 'Thanks, goodnight!' and went off stage to get a cup of tea and the crew were screaming at me that there was one song left! I had to walk back on, and the band were standing there waiting for me. They laughed it off, and so did I. You will make mistakes; it's how you deal with them that matters. Making mistakes of any sort makes you a better person and a better musician because that's how you learn. Never duck out of a mistake in your playing, or anywhere else. Take it, learn from it, move on.

"If you want to be a band player and tour with bands, then you have to commit to the road. You are not going to see much of your family, your friends, your partner. Hopefully, that commitment is already there from giving up time for practice, not going to the pub with friends, or having time out to have fun. Give yourself to the road, deal with tiredness, take good care of your health. Exercise is very helpful, and I meditate a few minutes each day, and before I go on stage. It's about centring, reminding yourself that you are good at this, and have a good show. You need to be sure that you are willing to give your time and your passion to your music because it's what makes you really happy. You need to know that early on and be sure, before you start working on anything else. I heard John Bonham, that was it, my commitment was there." **Andy Hughes**



2 PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

When two tourists, lost in downtown Manhattan, approached a man with a violin case and made the now-famous enquiry "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?", the man replied simply, "Practice". Unbeknownst to the bemused tourists, that man was Mischa Elman, the famous violinist renowned for his musical brilliance. And his point was simple – you've got to be really good to play at a place as special as that. Nevertheless, I suspect the point was lost on the hapless tourists, still no closer to knowing where Carnegie Hall was actually located. But to we musicians, it is a simple and profound metaphor that captures beautifully the essence of what one must do to get really good. There are no shortcuts, it takes no prisoners; just practice – pure and simple. However, once the commitment to regular practice has been made, getting it right so that clear improvement happens is a different matter entirely...

Here are some tips to think about to get the most out of your practising

1. BE REGULAR
Regular practice, even for a few minutes a day, is non-negotiable if improvement is the aim. There are certain things we all do every day – eat, sleep, work, etc., actions that are not often thought of as optional. A great musician will adopt that same attitude towards practice – not doing it every day simply isn't an option. Even if 10 minutes is all you have, so long as you know what to practise, 10 minutes is far better than no minutes at all. Regularity is also habit-forming and supports steady progress and development.
In 5 words: *Commit to daily practice, now.*

2. SET GOALS
Knowing what to practise is very important. Spend time in advance of your sessions developing and honing the routine, based on how much daily time you can commit to and what your goals are. The time you have available might be divided into different areas of focus, e.g. hand technique, time playing, stylistic studies, independence, etc., and that part is up to you. But do not make the mistake of overcrowding your routine! You may want to do it all and do it quickly but you have to be realistic. Focus on one or two areas and change up your routine regularly to ensure even coverage of topics. Do not try to cram it all into every session.
In 5 words: *Create a realistic practice routine.*

3. PRACTISE MINDFULLY
It's easy to get overly concerned with the number of hours that must be spent practising in order to get great. This is wasteful, counterproductive thinking which can also be very damaging. Concern yourself more with the quality of the activity that happens in that time. One hour spent practising, truly practising, is better than six hours spent noodling or regurgitating stuff that we can already do! True practising is working on things we can't do well enough yet or can't do at all. Make sure your practice routine reflects this.
In 5 words: *Only perfect practice makes perfect.*

4. SLOW DOWN
The mind controls the body, simple. And the mind only learns to control the body in a certain way if it learns to do so slowly, allowing time for neural networks to develop to the point of understanding. Remember learning to ride a bicycle? It was done slowly and deliberately, with repetition – for safety reasons mainly, of course! But the same applies when learning to acquire or develop any other skill. Slow practice – and by that, I mean slowing the metronome right down – is the best way to facilitate a deep understanding of what is to be learned. It allows time for the mind to think about every aspect of what is being executed, with slow, deliberate movements processed in a thoughtful, mindful way. Slow things right down, take your time and see the results happen.
In 5 words: *Slow practice equals fast progress.*

5. REWARD YOURSELF
So, after all this hard work in the practice room, what then? True, you should start to see genuine results and improvement pretty quickly which is often its own reward, but recognition of one's daily efforts should be acknowledged more promptly than that. So, decide on a reward for yourself, once you've achieved the aims of your practice session. It could be anything but make it something that you like and makes you happy. It might be eating some nice food, or playing a computer game, watching a movie perhaps, or even booking a holiday. Of course, probably the best thing to reward yourself with is more playing. Play along to your favourite music, work on that ridiculous chop you'll probably never get to use, or just have fun jamming because, after all, that's why we all picked up the sticks in the first place, right? To have fun! Work hard, but play hard too, because all work and no play is no fun at all.
In 5 words: *Small rewards are big motivators.*

So practising, perhaps the most obvious of our five ways to get great, is clearly important. But how and what you practise is vital. The more you do, the more you'll want to do and it'll form a great habit that will serve you well throughout your life as a musician. Which leads nicely into our third aspect of getting great: the idea that we're in it for the long haul. The road to greatness will be littered with those that don't make it and fall by the wayside, but if it was easy, everyone would do it. We have to be strong. We have to really want it. We have to be committed.

3 BE COMMITTED

Tennis superstar Martina Navratilova once said of commitment, "The difference between involvement and commitment is like ham and eggs. The chicken is involved; the pig is committed." You get the idea! There are many famous quotes about the nature of commitment, made by some of the world's most successful and influential people, all saying the same thing, more or less. They speak of a person's dedication to achieving their goals, of never quitting, of overcoming all obstacles that may be encountered along the way. And if you've followed our 5-step plan this far, it'll all count for nothing unless you've made the commitment to getting great.

Commitment usually means sacrifice

If you really want to commit to being the best you can be, you must be prepared to give things up. It is very rare to find any significant level of commitment to something that isn't accompanied by a similar level of personal sacrifice. But this should be seen as a great opportunity to give up those things that just aren't good for you, or are getting in the way of you achieving your goals. How great to ditch the bad stuff in favour of doing something that will help you achieve your ultimate goal. With a bit of thoughtful time management and an honest review of how you spend your time, you'll soon be on the path to being a much better drummer.

Don't be afraid of commitment

The thought of committing to anything can be scary. There is a certain finality to the word, a sense that 'if I do this, then this is it'. But stop and think for a minute – if you really love something (or someone), then being able to commit to that should be a cause for celebration. How lucky to have found something that makes you happy and be able to indulge in it. One of the great things about committing to an activity and not a person is that there is absolutely no danger of that commitment not being reciprocated. You will receive unconditional, boundless love from your drums and the more you put in, the more you will get back. So, face the fear and do it anyway. And remember, if it's not right for you, you can always change your mind and back out, knowing that it's OK to do so. No-one will get hurt, it'll be OK and the drums will always be there waiting whenever you're ready to commit again.

So, you've faced the fear and decided to commit. The practice routine is done and you've made a deal with yourself and your drums, in a 'let's do this!' kind of way. The benefits of truly committing to something can be huge and the results will be amazing! Now we move to step 4, the bit that is for many the most enjoyable part...

The Chic sticksman on staying positive...

Ralph Rolle

"I started playing 'She Loves You', and I just loved the groove of it when I heard it, so I learned it. Ringo looked like a guy with cool hair having so much fun! Your ears are the most important tool you have when you start learning to play the drums. You have to understand what players put in, and what they leave out, and why, that's the first and most important thing you have to do as a drummer. It's no good listening to one style, unless you want to be a one-style player. These days, you need to be versatile, because the opportunities that are going to come your way are going to be from different styles of bands, and it's no use waiting for the one band that suits your style, you will wait forever! Remember, you fit into the music, the music does not fit into you.

"Commitment goes hand in hand with sacrifice, and that means family time. It was a choice I made, to be committed to music, and I knew what I was giving up and I accepted it. I think a feeling of satisfaction and self-worth goes some way to making up for the things you miss. Even now I still can't believe that I am doing what I am doing, and where I am doing it, and who with. But when I think of that, it makes everything worth it, the times when I am away from home in a hotel room on my own. I remember the gig, and that's why I am here, and it makes it feel worthwhile. No matter how successful you are, the feelings of doubt come to you, and the commitment you have decided to make is what is going to get you past them.

"Playing with other musicians is what really teaches you your craft. When you start out, you take everything that is offered to you, and hopefully, that puts you in lots of different musical situations which is great for expanding your skills and repertoire as a player. It is the music business, you have to pay your bills, so while not every gig is what you want or feel comfortable with, it's still paying the bills until something you really want comes along. Take both, embrace both, and learn from both. Sometimes that can mean playing well outside your comfort zone, an unfamiliar style with musicians who know it well, and you feel unsure and nervous. One way to deal with nerves is to expect them, and treat them like a friend. Treat nerves like someone in the room – I'll see you later, I have to go and do a gig now. The more comfortable you are, the nerves will lessen, so be as prepared as you can for what you are doing. Enjoy the sound you make, be in touch with your kit, it helps nerves a lot.

"Staying positive is very important because you have to be the master of your own mind. Yes, you may go wrong here and there, but the trick is, don't let it show in your face. If you don't look like you went wrong, the audience probably won't notice. The band will know, but they make mistakes too, so they'll cut you some slack. It's the same with nerves, take them in and embrace them. When I sat down behind my kit at Glastonbury on the Main Stage when Chic played after Barry Gibb, all I could see was a sea of thousands of people up the hill, and over the top as far as I could see. I just took a deep breath, looked at my man Jerry Barnes (Chic bassist) and the nerves all went away and we had the best gig ever. I am a positive person by nature, I don't let things get me down." **Andy Hughes**

4 PLAY WITH OTHER MUSICIANS

In a sense, step 4 could be viewed as the last piece of the jigsaw. It's payback for all our efforts – putting it all together by indulging in the pure magical process of creating music. Like the human fingerprint or a snowflake, every musical performance will always be a uniquely special event. And to play a part in that wonderful thing could be viewed as the obvious culmination of all previous hard work and endeavour.

The benefits of playing live with other musicians simply cannot be overstated, especially in consideration of the ultimate goal here, to become a great musician. It is the place where you'll learn to use your ears, recreate the music you've listened to in a way you know is right and put the skills you have honed in the practice room to the test, in a one-chance, winner-takes-all environment – the live stage.

One fundamental skill every drummer must develop is the ability to support and enhance the music. The only way the drummer can do this effectively is to learn how to use their ears to really listen to what is going on, creating and adapting the part to be played, in real-time. And the only possible way to develop this skill is to play with other musicians.

Play with different people constantly

Simply put, the more people you can play with, the more you will understand how people play music and your role within the creation of it. Everyone has their own way of doing things and every musical situation you find yourself in will be different from the last. This is how experience, that great commodity that can't be bought or taught, is gained. Playing with lots of different people when you're starting out is the act of serving the apprenticeship, of paying one's dues, of walking in the footsteps of all those who've gone before. Make it your goal to play with musicians at a higher level than you. This is the best way to learn and progress.

Don't say no to anything

Take on as many gigs as you can. Say yes to opportunities as often as you can. Aside from developing your live chops

and confidence, you will get to meet more people who might be able to help you along the way. The music industry is all about networking. It's less about who you know and more about who knows you. And the only way to get your name out there is to get out there, meet people and play!

So with that, the penultimate step, we've nearly reached the culmination of our journey towards greatness. There's just one stepping stone left, perhaps a less-obvious one in terms of practicality, but one that is invaluable nonetheless. It could be viewed as the glue that binds all the other steps together, the one thing that will ensure your journey to being the best you can be is as fulfilling as possible.

The session supremo's expert advice...

Neal Wilkinson

"When I was a kid I used to listen to a lot of my brother's music – from The Beatles and The Rolling Stones to Motown. The first music I discovered that I really felt was my own though, was the mid-'70s Stevie Wonder records – and they are still my favourites now. I felt like I learned so much about life from them and, for me, it has always been more about being moved by the music I'm listening to, rarely just the drums. Music is subjective but be open to growing as a musician by exposing yourself to as many different styles as possible, and really immerse yourself in them. Listening forms you as a musician, and all the music I've listened to over the years hopefully allows me to play the right thing, at the right time, and be in the moment. Listening to, and playing, music is such a beautiful thing to do and a wonderful process for life, so study the craft and be committed to it – in the same way you would if you were a painter exploring all the incredible early masters.

"It's playing with other musicians that will help you develop you as a drummer. It's all very well watching YouTube – and, believe me, if I was a young drummer today I'd be tempted to watch Steve Gadd all the time! – but you are not going to learn the skills that you need to play with other musicians by doing that because most of the time those skills are not apparent – in fact, they are actually transparent... It's very easy to see the chops and the notes being played, but the skills required to be a great drummer are what the other musicians can *feel*, not what you can see. Yes, it's fantastic to be inspired by something that you watch, but the skill itself is only going to come from the experience of playing with, and listening to, other musicians. I've always seen the drums as the energy within a band and again that conviction, and the ability to make the players around you feel good, can only be developed by interacting with others.

"I am always looking for new ways to keep my playing fresh... That might mean trying something new, revisiting old music, or listening to a Spotify playlist that someone has sent me – as opposed to a cassette or album, which is what used to happen in the old days! But seriously, the most important thing is being open to new ideas.

"We will all face challenges at different times of our lives and, when I lost my Dad towards the end of last year, I have no doubt that it would have been even harder if I hadn't had music to help me heal. For me, the best medicine when you are facing a challenge is to listen to a piece of music that you love."

Louise King

Check out page 98 of this very issue for Neal's Six of the Best...

5 STAY POSITIVE AND ENJOY THE RIDE!

The ability to maintain a positive mental attitude, regardless of what life brings, is perhaps the single most important attribute for achieving those goals and, perhaps more importantly, enjoying the ride along the way. John Lennon once wrote, "life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans". This illustrates perfectly the point that life is all about the journey, not the destination. The previous four steps along our road to musical greatness all have one thing in common – they are focussed on the achievement of a goal and thereby on some event in the future. This final step will help us to also keep present in the here and now while working on those future goals.

You are not your brain

As musicians, it is almost a rite of passage to have experienced feelings of self-doubt and negativity. While these states of mind are not unnatural, they can be damaging and restrictive and, no matter how much time and effort are put into the previous steps, they can be the undoing of it all. Your brain, left unchecked, will do its utmost to trick and fool you into believing the negative thoughts it mischievously generates. The more you understand and recognise this, the less likely you will be to pay any serious attention to these false thoughts and feelings of doubt and negativity.

Be mindful

Taking time to focus on the here and now is very important and a useful way of bringing context and perspective to our ambitions. While it is positive and important to maintain focus on future goals, so too is being aware and mindful of the here and now. Life is not the future and not the past – the here and now is where life is lived. Taking some time to be aware of the present can be energising and refreshing, giving you new strength to continue the journey. You are on a journey, after all, one that is full of amazing experiences. A lyric by the late, great Neil Peart, so sudden and tragic was his recent passing, feels appropriate to include here. He observed, "The point of the journey, is not to arrive. Anything can happen."

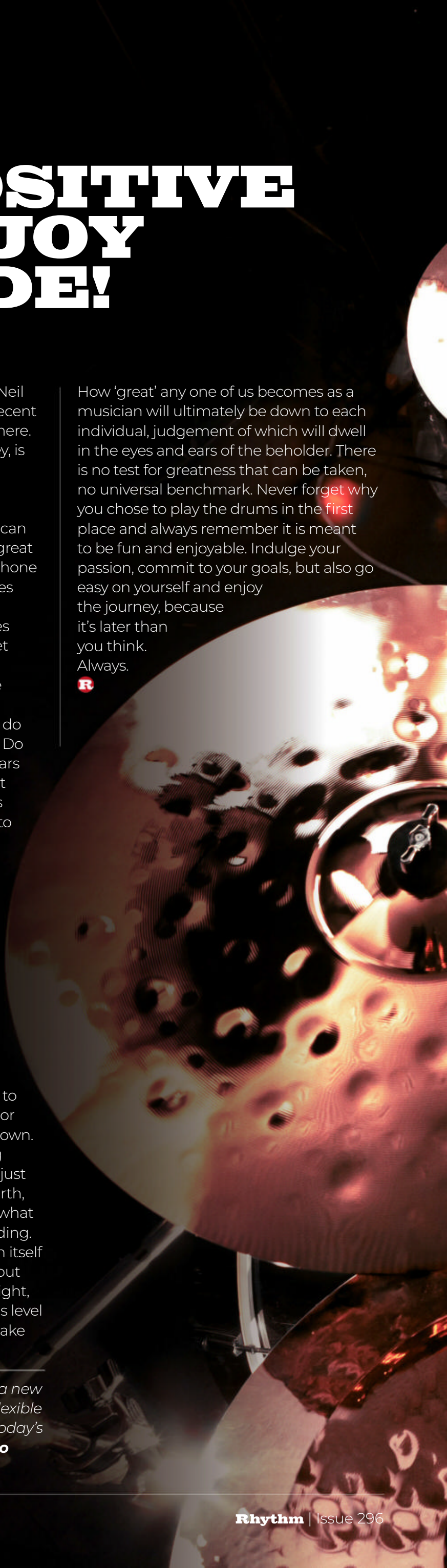
Accept life and your mistakes

For many musicians, professional life can be a rollercoaster! It can all be going great one minute and then suddenly the phone stops ringing and you need sunglasses to look at the diary. How many times you're knocked down by life's punches isn't important – it's how often you get back up again that counts. Just as in life, in live performance you *will* make mistakes. A certainty! But it's not the mistake that counts, rather what you do immediately after it that's important. Do you dwell on it and let another four bars go by worrying about it, leading to yet more mistakes? Or do you forget it as quickly as it happened, allowing you to focus on the rest of the performance unhindered? These and others are the actions that will ultimately come to define us as musicians. To err is human, to forgive, divine. Forgive yourself your mistakes, do not punish yourself for them. But do learn from them.

Be resilient

The more times you can get up after being knocked down, the more resilient you will become. You will develop an inner strength and ability to keep going. Consider the tardigrade, or water bear as it's more commonly known. This microscopic creature is the living embodiment of the word 'resilience', just as happy living on the Moon as on Earth, it can survive at the extreme ends of what the physical world is capable of providing. And if things get too much, it will turn itself into glass, live for a few decades without food or water and, when the time is right, rehydrate and carry on as normal. This level of resilience is something we can all take inspiration from.

How 'great' any one of us becomes as a musician will ultimately be down to each individual, judgement of which will dwell in the eyes and ears of the beholder. There is no test for greatness that can be taken, no universal benchmark. Never forget why you chose to play the drums in the first place and always remember it is meant to be fun and enjoyable. Indulge your passion, commit to your goals, but also go easy on yourself and enjoy the journey, because it's later than you think.
Always.
R



Adam Bushell is one of the founders of WaterBear, a new music college based in Brighton. WaterBear offer flexible and innovative BA (Hons) and Masters courses for today's music industry professionals. ***For more details go to www.waterbear.org.uk.***

Words: **Rich Chamberlain** Images: **James Cumpsty**

THE PERCUSSIONISTS

Four heads are better than one! Here comes a quartet of the industry's finest to tell you just what it takes to make it as a professional percussionist

You simply can't have failed to notice the explosion in the world of percussion that has happened in the last decade. Unless you've been living on Mars, of course, but even then we reckon a cajon or two must have made it that far into deep space. The rapidly-growing availability of percussive treats has allowed kit players to experiment with some stripped-back sounds via that aforementioned cajon or maybe a shaker or two. However, the role of the dedicated percussionist has remained a position steeped in supreme ability, vast musical knowledge and an innate ability to pick parts to not just stay out of the way of the singer, guitarist, keys player (the list goes on) but also to make sure their rhythms perfectly complement the kit player.

Sometimes the percussionist leads as well, especially outside of Western culture where it is the most senior instrument. Percussion as a side player is more of a Western popular music thing, and it's a demanding role, so Rhythm realised that we needed to find a bona fide percussion superstar to do this almighty topic any justice. Well, we really came up trumps there, because we didn't just find one... we locked four of the UK's top percussion experts in a room and didn't let them out until they'd shared stories and imparted wisdom galore on the role of a percussionist, the must-have gear for those starting out and how to find a path as a pro percussion player in these increasingly tough times. Ladies and gents, it's an honour to present to you Miles Bould, Pete Lockett, Lea Mullen and Fergus Gerrand.

Rhythm: The obvious place to begin, how did you start out as percussionists?

Lea: "I started out as a drummer and then got a job in a large music shop in Manchester – that's when I started meeting lots of people and became aware of percussionists."

Fergus: "I just always wanted to hit things! I went to two concerts when I was young – Queen and the other one was Buddy Rich. Those two things set me on the road to ruin [laughs]."

Miles: "For me, it was listening to my dad's records. I picked out the drums but then wanted to understand the little noises in the background. I started as an alto player but I was smacking it rather than blowing it. I listened to Art Blakey records and I wanted to know the instruments that were working around the drums."

Pete: "I was into punk. I was a late starter at 19. I saw an advert in a music store and had drum lessons and discovered percussion by chance and then the whole world of Indian rhythms. Once you get into that kind of thing... I went from the punk thing to an Indian thing and I think that shows something that is important for all of us – that open mind."

Fergus: "Because anything can be percussive, it's never-ending – it's a nightmare trying to play it all!"

Rhythm: How easy was it for you as drummers to then turn to percussion?

Lea: "For me, I was surrounded by really good drummers and I wanted to play with them. There's a lot of drummers who think they can play percussion and when you get into it and you're picking holes and space in what a drummer is doing, it becomes a whole different thing. It's such a great opportunity for me because I get to play with so many great drummers."

Miles: "I was fascinated in how I was going to work with a drummer. I wanted to find a way to complement the drummer and learn how to find the spaces."

Pete: "I was a bit more of a hermit really. I did the drumset thing and then I did the Indian thing and focused on that for six years. It was quite a long time into my development that I started working with other percussionists in the way that you would in the West. In India, you get a lot of unison stuff so you get a group of tabla players and they play parts together, not the interlocking stuff that you find between a drummer and a percussionist, or within African and Latin American traditions."

Fergus: "I always was more into drummers that were percussion-based. So I was into Bill Bruford when he had an unusual set-up with all of the Simmons pads and this huge dynamic within the kit – that always appealed to me. I looked at guys like Danny Cummings who had a lot of pop gigs at the time and I thought that was a way that I could become a pop star without being a pop star. I could travel the world, make lots of money and drinks lots – and it worked."

Pete: "Well, it did once you'd moved off the triangle!"

Fergus: "No, I'm still on that, there's a lifetime on the triangle!"

Miles: "Everything was percussion for me up until when I was about 19 or 20 and then I was quietly woodshedding behind the kit as well. I learnt some two and four so I could get called for other work and expand my vocabulary, but also my fascination was with how I could work with a drummer and I explored that by being able to play. That meant that I had more of an idea of what a drummer might do. I think we should all do that. I try to do that with singers. I can't sing but I will sing through a song sometimes and learn what my role is."

See more from the percussionists at www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Pete: "If you just focus on one instrument you might not hear everything else. When you start putting projects together you're not *only* focused on what the drummer is doing, you're focusing on the whole thing. By taking part in different elements of music-making it broadens your whole approach to your instrument."

Miles: "Exactly, that helps you appreciate your role and what you need to do to move the music forward."

Fergus: "Maybe that is more appropriate for percussion because your role isn't concrete. You're often trying to slot into the music and thinking about how you can enhance it."

Miles: "I started, as a percussionist, listening

LEA MULLEN

Manchester's Lea Mullen took on the role of chairing our percussion roundtable and did a fine job in drawing wisdom out of our supremely talented collective, while also chipping in with more than his own fair share of top tips and advice. It's little wonder that Lea has plenty of pearls to share, he has after all recorded and toured with some of music's top names, including his own solo album which featured the talents of an army of fellow percussion heavyweights such as Luis Conte, Bashiri Johnson and fellow roundtable member Pete Lockett. Perhaps best known for his long association with George Michael, Lea is also a fine kit player and an in-demand educator. A forthcoming album featuring Lea, Pete Lockett, Mino Cinélu and Luis Conte is due out in 2020 and will also include a vinyl limited-edition.

Lea Mullen plays Pearl percussion, Leiva percussion, Zildjian cymbals, Pro-Mark sticks, Matt Nolan creations, Roland, Remo drum heads and Protection Racket cases

"I WAS SURROUNDED **BY GOOD DRUMMERS** AND I WANTED TO **PLAY WITH THEM.**"

to the guitar and the percussive element of it because I could hear that it wasn't a million miles away from the sound of the instrument that I was playing. You need to think about what you're interrupting. You might play a conga part through a really nice guitar part and if you understand the instruments then you will realise that you need to play around that. It was only when I had played a bit of kit that I really understood that."

Fergus: "It's about the frequencies and leaving space..."

Pete: "...But finding space as well. You need to find the gaps where you can play."

Lea: "Miles, how do you see the role of a percussionist?"

Miles: "Where to start! I guess trying to complement the drummer and then taking that to the next level, trying to complement the music – that's the ultimate aim. I think you want to 99% of the time give a forward motion to the groove and lift a chorus or cover a section where maybe there's a breakdown."

Pete: "I think exactly that and whether I'm going to do something that is in unison or something that interlocks. I listen for the frequencies of what a drummer is doing. If it's a real tom-tom sort of thing with low frequencies then top-end stuff might work. If it's more of a standard drum groove then percussion frequencies in the middle will probably work depending on how busy the hi-hat is."

Lea: "You do so much of the Indian stuff but I know you also do a lot of sessions in the pop world. How would you approach working with a producer as a percussionist in a pop setting?"

Pete: "I get as much information beforehand as I can. You want to be as effective as possible with as small a set-up as possible. Otherwise, with percussion, you can be confused by the array of choice. Over the last 30 years it has changed, in the pop world you're more inclined to do less performance and more of a loop-based approach, which is a shame."

Fergus: "I did an album once and percussion was the first thing to be recorded and all they did was give me a load of different click tracks and tempos and I gave them different versions of things. When I heard the album later on I thought, "If I'd realised the music was like that I wouldn't have played that!' There's a lot in the dynamics and playing in between what the drummer plays and not stepping on their feet. If the drummer has a load of crash cymbals then you don't turn up with a load of crash cymbals, you bring different options. Often, I do fills before the drummer might do a fill, maybe on the bar before last bar or just afterwards to avoid what the drummer is doing." ▷

Lea: "I think that's the positive of us all playing kit, you can feel where the drummer will be and you can play either side of them. I think there's a lot of percussionists who play for the sake of playing and it's all too busy."
Fergus: "The relationship that you have as a percussionist with a drummer is the same as any relationship. It needs to be mutually respectful. Everybody has an ego and you need to be aware of that and keep it in check."
Lea: "How about gear when you're called into a session? We've all had it when we've had a call for a session and we ask what they want us to bring and they say to bring everything... and then you need a truck."
Fergus: "Several trucks! It's about extracting as much information as you can prior to the session. You try to learn about the artist, where they are historically and where they are now. Hopefully, they'll send you some music beforehand so you can come up with some ideas. The standard gear you would take would be a box of hand percussion and you'd work from there based on whether it's orchestral or Latin or a soundtrack or whatever. A lot of it is people management and just getting on with people. A lot of sessions don't go well if you don't have a good connection. You also have to be good at explaining to a producer who might not know much about percussion exactly what you can do. Sometimes you might be doing a session and producer says, 'I'm just going to make a cup of tea, can you do a tambourine take for me?' And they don't even listen to it. In that instance, I'll try to do an arrangement of the song as I'm doing it to give them different options in the verses, the choruses, the middle eight maybe and just build throughout. Then, they've got different options to choose from."
Lea: "I did an album recently and I went

PETE LOCKETT

Did you hear the one about the punk rocker who became a trailblazing exponent of Indian rhythms? Pete Lockett may have ended his first gig in a blaze of punk rock fury by trashing his kit, but before long he was fully emerged in a very different end of the musical spectrum by immersing himself in world music and Indian percussion. A-list artists such as Björk, Peter Gabriel, The Verve, Amy Winehouse and Robert Plant are just a handful of many to have benefitted from the Brit's talent across an array of percussion pieces. He has also moved into the world of movie scores, contributing to soundtracks for the likes of Guy Ritchie's gangster flick *Snatch*, *Moulin Rouge!* and several Bond films. Pete has also been a prolific educator for many years – often contributing to the pages of this very magazine – and today his main output involves solo projects and collaborations.

Pete Lockett plays DW drums, LP percussion, Sabian cymbals, Remo drum heads, Vic Firth sticks and ATV drums

"I THINK **YOUNG PERCUSSIONISTS** NEED **TO MAKE** THEIR OWN **WORLD**."

FERGUS GERRAND

Another master of all trades who has enjoyed success as a percussionist, drummer and educator, Fergus Gerrand has enjoyed a standard-setting career as a session player. In the studio, he has recorded with a treasure trove of world-class musicians and chart-topping artists, such as Sting, Madonna, Katie Melua and Peter Gabriel. Taking his array of percussion instruments out onto the road, Fergus has toured with everyone from classic rockers to stadium-filling poppers. We're talking Take That, Spice Girls, Whitesnake, Duran Duran, David Guetta, Donna Summer, Robert Plant, Bryan Adams and many, many more. He has also ventured into the world of advertising work, lending his talents to consumer titans such as Coca-Cola, Virgin, Harley Davidson, Adidas and Disney. Not a bad CV, we suppose.

Fergus Gerrand plays Zildjian cymblas, Pearl percussion, Keith Keough (British Drum Company) creations, Matt Nolan Custom Percussion and Remo drum heads

Watch the percussionists jam at www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

"I JUST ALWAYS WANTED TO HIT THINGS!"

in completely blind. I went in and they played the music to me and they asked for variations. Maybe not playing the conga slaps on the downbeats, maybe playing them on the upbeats. Or maybe not so much palm-tip so it doesn't get in the way of the hi-hat frequencies and isn't too busy."

Miles: "That totally resonates with me. When I first started, because I was young and excited, I wanted to throw everything at every session I did. Working with good producers taught me about space and that it's OK to be confident in just playing a tambourine on the two and the four. You have to let go of your ego.'"

Fergus: "There's that story of a famous percussionist on his first session in LA and he'd learnt all of these conga chops and he blasted them. They told him to play a bit simpler and he did it again and they said, 'OK, we've got it.' He went for lunch and then was loading his gear out in the car park and a mate of his was coming in and this mate said he was coming in to do this percussion session. The guy said, 'No, I've just done that session... oh no wait, maybe I haven't!' You learn very quickly."

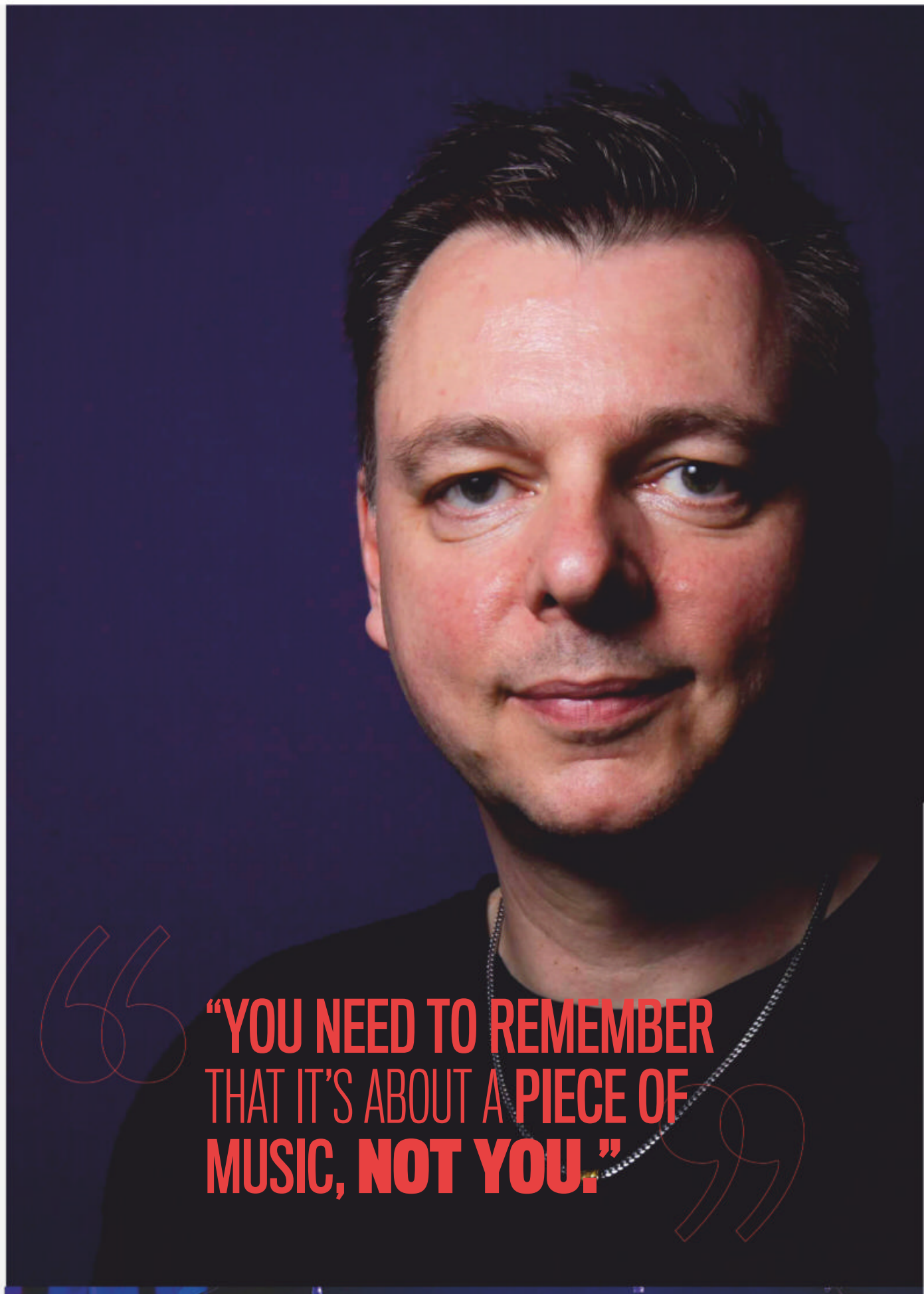
Pete: "It's a guttural thought, but on a session I'm like the producer's sound module. If you want me to compose then that's different. I did a session with Phil Manzanera and we ended up taking the AC unit down and playing that and playing dustbins, it was amazing."

Miles: "But it can't be amazing all of the time. Maybe out of 20 sessions there might be one where you can be really who you are. I did a Level 42 album and the first thing I did was play batá, and I said, 'Are

you sure guys?!' And it worked."
Pete: "The track sounded batá for it [a mixture of laughs and groans!]."
Miles: "Do you guys read?"
Fergus: "Yeah, I read."
Pete: "I read but I don't really do reading gigs. I don't enjoy reading so I don't do it."
Fergus: "The challenge is to read it and get feel into it on the first few takes. I did a session and I was given this huge stack of papers and 'Pirates of Penzance' was in there and the first 90-seconds was all orchestral snare drum. I thought I needed to have a good look at it over lunch. The session started and the conductor said, 'Fergus, let's do 'Pirates of Penzance.' The very first thing of the day! So it started and about 50 seconds in he stopped it and said, 'Fergus, bar 87 there's an accent on the third beat.' So I said, 'Oh, it's not written on my part' and I pretended to write it in! Things like that are a big challenge. If you're reading you need to do it every day. You don't have to read for every session but I find it really useful that if I'm listening to something I can write it down."
Pete: "I think that transcribing is the most important element of learning an instrument. You spend so much time within that little area of music going into the extreme detail."
Lea: "I did a gig recently playing Sister Sledge tunes and all of the parts were written out. It was strict because the artist needed to hear certain things. Most of the time though you have a slightly freer role."

Rhythm: What were your first percussion instruments?

Lea: "Gear wise, the first congas I got were from George Frederick when he was at Pearl. I had a gig working every weekend in a house band and we did three sets a night."
Pete: "My first percussion instrument was a set of tablas..."
Fergus: "Straight in at the deep end!"
Pete: "I went to get these tablas and on the way home the car broke down. I spent six hours waiting for the AA. Finally, I got home and I was tuning them with the hammer and I went straight through the head. A 10-hour day and I went straight through the head!"
Fergus: "My first set of congas, I saw an advert in the back of *Melody Maker*. I went to Notting Hill Gate to get these congas and they belonged to Mick Jones from The Clash! He was in this smoke-filled studio in the basement and when he opened the door I couldn't even see him. They were Natal congas... You just couldn't find percussion when I started. I couldn't wait to get to America and find all of these instruments."
Lea: "It was so hard to get a cajon. I saw a World Beat one in a magazine but nobody sold them. Now every company does its own cajon."



See more from the percussionists at www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

MILES BOULD

An accomplished kit player as well as percussionist, London-born Miles was surrounded by the greats of jazz from an early age thanks to his father, a renowned music producer. While still in his teens, after making a switch from alto to percussion, Miles was already working the club scene. Since then he has become a staple of the British percussion scene, working with artists as varied as Sting, Level 42, Joe Cocker and Incognito. Not only that, but he also gave back to musicians the world over by teaming up with fellow percussionist Danny Cummings to produce the *Rhythm of Life* sample and loop album. Aside from a hugely successful session career, Miles has also headed his own projects, such as funk band Goosebump, fusion outfit Peoplespeak, the MOBO-nominated USONiC and solo album, *TRiBUTE*.

Miles Bould plays Gon Bops percussion, Sabian cymbals, Remo drum heads, Vic Firth sticks, Vintage Soul and Gretsch drums, Hardcase and Protection Racket cases

Fergus: "I think it takes a long time to realise what a good-sounding instrument is. The amount of tambourines I went through before I realised what a good tambourine is!"
Miles: "I agree. I've brought a few cymbals over the years and taken them away and now 15 years down the line I've realised that cymbal that I thought wasn't that great was actually fantastic and maybe it was these [waves hands] that weren't working."
Lea: "I've done that on a session. I've been playing one shaker and then try another one and then I think, 'I wish I'd brought the other one that's on my kitchen table!'"
Pete: "What does a young percussionist starting out need, in terms of gear?"
Lea: "Dave Hassell is a tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music and he has a bag for all of his students. In that bag he makes them buy a tambourine, a cabasa, a shaker, a pair of claves and a triangle. That is a great starting point."
Fergus: "That's the first 20 years!"
Pete: "The first gig I did was with the rock band Thunder and that was just one bag of percussion because that was all I had."
Miles: "I think when you go with whatever instrument you have, you must know them and understand their role so you're not caught out – be prepared. For young session players coming up, care for your instrument. It is about your playing, but if you turn up with good flight cases and equipment that you've cared for, you're showing you have pride in what you do. Sometimes I'd take something out of the box that I hadn't really practised and I quickly realised that it wasn't a good idea."
Fergus: "You need an open-minded approach to the instruments and a way of working with people. There's a great story about the fantastic percussionist Ralph MacDonald and the producer called him in for a session and asked what he thought. Ralph listened to the track and said he didn't actually think it needed anything else and the producer said, 'That's what I thought, I just wanted to hear it from you,' and he paid him and sent him on his way. That's leaving your ego at the door."
Pete: "It's back to being a sound module, that's an abstract thing, it's not about your personality."
Miles: "You need to remember that it's about a piece of music, not you. That's a biggie. I made those mistakes when I was much younger. I'd hear a record by a great artist and I'd try to cram things that I had heard onto a record. Like I said earlier, a tambourine on a chorus is fine and you can take pride in that and make it sound really good."
Pete: "That takes experience though when you have a studio full of people looking at you. Just playing a bell on the last note of the track takes some confidence."
Lea: "What other advice do we have for young percussionists? For me, growing up in the '80s everything had percussion on it. I feel sorry for younger percussionists because there was a lot more work then."
Fergus: "I think it's the technology, isn't it. Producers now have the ability to do everything, so why wouldn't they?"
Pete: "There's a lack of music education because if a producer just wants a flavour of something then they can just stick a loop on and it's job done. I think young percussionists need to make their own world. It's only really here in the West that percussion is a bit-part player. You go to India, Japan, Africa, Latin America, in the majority of the world percussion is a big part of popular music. I think now you've got to be versatile."
Miles: "As a percussionist or drummer you could be versatile by also playing another instrument, like bass. That helps you also understand what's going on, on the other side of the room when you're in the studio."
Lea: "Young players also now have social media to put themselves out there. Pete is great at that and so is Ash Soan, he puts out some great, musical videos."
Fergus: "The importance of a historical context is often overlooked. The drum kit has only been in existence for 100 years. When you think about who would we recommend young players to listen to, you look at James Blades and Emil Richards, their books came out 40 years ago and are often overlooked by YouTube which comes up with the newest or the fastest fills."
Miles: "Look at the music that you want to make and where you want to go on your journey and then look at and recognise the people that have gone there before."
Fergus: "Percussion is such a vast area that you can only scratch the surface. I could live to be 1,000 and I'd still see another peak to assail..."
Lea: "...And another shaker to buy!"

Pete Lockett will be hitting the road in April and May for a series of clinic dates at Drummers Only in Glasgow, Gear 4 Music in York, Sound Attack in Colchester, Drummers Only in Leeds, Rattle & Drum in Derby and Johnny Roadhouse in Manchester. Visit petelockett.com for more.

Art

Blakey

THE MESSENGER

In honour of the centennial anniversary of Art Blakey's birthday, Rhythm celebrates his life and legacy with the help of three people that the legendary bandleader took under his wing. Cindy Blackman Santana, Jean Toussaint, and John Ramsay share their memories of a man who changed jazz and drumming forever.

Words: David West **Image:** David Corio/Getty Images

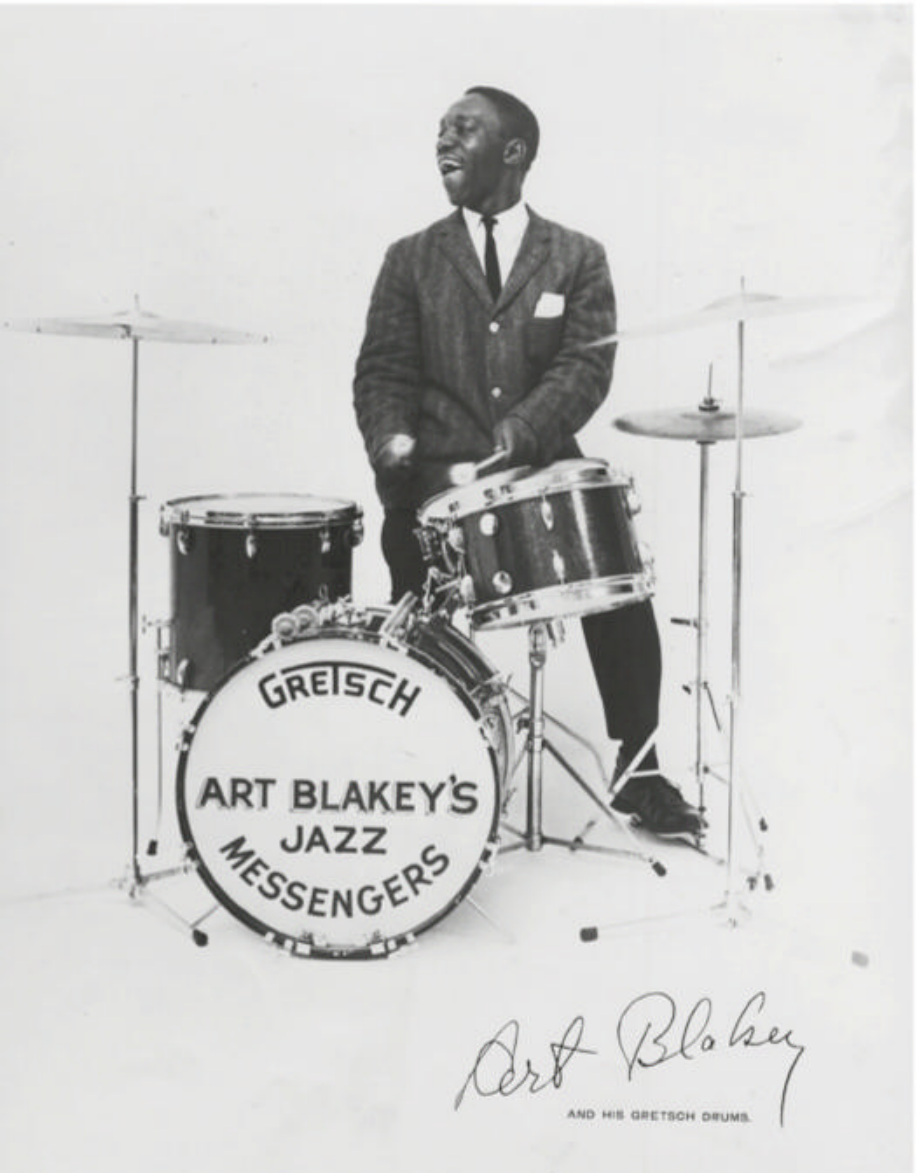


Image: Gilles Petard/Getty Images

"...I'VE SEEN HIM MAKE **A STAGE MOVE**, AND **I DON'T MEAN** SOME LITTLE WIGGLE, I MEAN I'VE SEEN HIM MAKE **A STAGE MOVE** HE WAS **SO POWERFUL.**"

CINDY BLACKMAN SANTANA

"It was like sitting on an atom bomb," said tenor sax player Johnny Griffin when jazz drummer Arthur Taylor asked him what it was like playing with Art Blakey for his book *Notes And Tones*. "That was a fantastic experience because Bu [Blakey's nickname] is so strong with his thing. Oh, man, explosions!"

It's hard to overstate Blakey's importance to drumming and jazz. Leading the Jazz Messengers, he defined what became known as hard bop. "His drive and his sound, his command of the music, his innovation, the way that he played the time, the way he played with the time and juxtaposed the time, the way he pushed the soloists, the way he swung so incredibly and made the music have such an amazing feel, and yet at the same time he was completely bombastic and energetic, it just blew my mind," says Cindy Blackman Santana. Blakey played with the greats – Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, Thelonious Monk, Cannonball Adderley – and the Jazz Messengers was a training ground for young musicians that provided a launch pad for a generation of bandleaders. But Blakey's first professional gig was as a pianist. Born in Pittsburgh, 11th October 1919, he never knew his parents, was married for the first time with a child of his own at 15, and he was determined to do whatever it took to get out of the steel mill where he was working at the time. Self-taught, he could play a little piano, just enough to get hired in a local club until the owner decided he wanted to make a change on the bandstand. "The owner decided that he was going to have Art Blakey switch to drums, and have Erroll Garner play piano," says Blackman Santana. "He told Art, 'You're going to be playing drums.' He said, 'But I'm not a drummer, I'm a piano player.' The guy put a gun to Art's head and said, 'No, you're playing drums.' Art said, 'Okay, I'm playing drums.'"

Blakey's conversion may have come at gunpoint, but it set him on the career path he would pursue for the rest of his life. He played in the big bands of Fletcher Henderson and Billy Eckstine – the latter of which featured Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker and was an incubator for bebop. In New York he met Chick Webb, whose drumming was an influence on everyone who heard him play, including Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich. Blakey served as Webb's valet. Blakey's unmistakeable press roll, beautifully described by jazz critic Dan Morgenstern as "a sound like a giant clearing his throat" was perfected under Webb's tutelage while hanging out during a rehearsal of Webb's orchestra. "Chick told him to go upstairs and play a press roll on the snare drum and not to stop until he told him to," says Blackman Santana. "He was playing this press roll for a long time, it was so long he stopped, and he didn't hear the band playing so he figured the band was done rehearsing. He went downstairs and Chick Webb got mad at him. He told him to get his butt back upstairs and to keep playing that press roll! He said that's how he developed it, because Chick Webb made him play it for so long."

John Ramsay experienced the power of Blakey's press roll up close during the years he spent as second drummer in Blakey's big band of the 1980s, and then as his tour manager. Decades later, Ramsay remains in awe of Blakey's trademark roll. "That little half-a-measure from pianissimo to fortissimo in two beats, there's no explanation for that. You hear that and it's like ripping paper," says Ramsay, who now teaches at Berklee College Of Music in Boston. "He would have one stick to the right edge of the drum and the other stick close to the left edge of the drum, then moving both hands in towards the middle as the roll got louder, but I noticed one night that he played a long version of that roll and near the end of the roll where it got loud, he put the bass drum in there like a flutter. I don't want to say it had metric value, it was almost like a nervous twitch on the bass drum that came in towards the end and lifted it up and filled it out even a little bit more. You can hear that on some of the records where he plays that roll and once it gets to the louder dynamics, he slips in that bass drum like a flutter. That explains some of it but not all of it."

Image: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

Blakey's big band experiences with Henderson and Eckstine had a lasting impact on his approach. He started using the Messengers name in 1947 on his first recording dates as a bandleader for Blue Note. There was a short-lived big band called The Seventeen Messengers, but around 1954 Blakey and pianist Horace Silver formed a new group called The Jazz Messengers. Silver soon departed to lead his own projects, but the style that Blakey established with Silver, known as hard bop, took the energy, drive and groove of a big band and brought those into a small ensemble. "Art rewrote the rules for drums and for accompaniment," says Jean Toussaint, saxophonist with the Jazz Messengers from 1982 to 1986. "He rewrote the rules for making a small band sound huge. He loved the big band, but financially it wasn't viable to have a big band on the road, he knew that. There was Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Buddy Rich, those guys were well established, so he thought okay, I'll take all the elements of big band charts and use it in a small band capacity and have some great soloists on top of that. He was able to carve that path out for himself. The critics eventually called it hard bop, but he didn't call it that. He just called it great music."

"He usually had a two or three horn group," adds Ramsay, "so he was definitely shaping the melodies and the heads of tunes with a big band approach – horn figures, ensemble figures." Graduates of the Jazz Messengers include Lee Morgan, Hank Mobley, Wynton and Branford Marsalis, Wayne Shorter, Benny Golson, Terence Blanchard, Freddie Hubbard, and Keith Jarrett. Blakey was more than just a bandleader; he was a mentor. "Art was incredible, he was like a father figure to all of us because once you got into the band, that was it, you are part of his family now," says Toussaint. "He protected us on the road, he looked after us, he took us everywhere. Club owners would try to separate the band and him, and he never wanted that. He always wanted us with him, around him, so it made you feel part of the family."

Nowadays, Toussaint lives in London where he's been known to play the Messengers' catalogue with his Roots & Herbs project featuring drummers like Troy Miller, Mark Mondesir, Shane Forbes, and Femi Koleoso. His time with Blakey still carries with it a certain prestige – "Once you've got that, that was it, you're a Jazz Messenger for life," says Toussaint who believes Blakey's wealth of musical knowledge was integral to his talent for steering the group from the drums. "He had a lot of experience with that working with Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and those guys, the founding fathers of bebop, Thelonious Monk," says Toussaint. "I guess his goal was to speak to the audience through the music. He always wanted us to connect with the audience. He said, 'Don't play above or below your audience, play directly to them and bring them into what you're doing and engage with them.' That was an important lesson to learn."

John Ramsay's introduction to Blakey came after Gamal Blakey, one of Art's sons, heard him playing with Sonny Stitt and recommended Ramsay for the second drummer spot in Blakey's big band. One might be forgiven for wondering why a player as revered as Art Blakey wanted another drummer on the bandstand. "He was asked that question often," says Ramsay, "and his response was, 'Well, if two horn players can play together, two drummers can play together.'" Ramsay drove to New York from Massachusetts to the studio where the auditions were taking place. He sat quietly at a table while the band rehearsed and waited for Blakey to arrive. "I'll never forget this," says Ramsay. "Art wasn't large in stature, he was a short man, but the door blew open and the

Image: Shawn Pearce

JOINING BLAKEY'S CARAVAN
CHRIS HIGGINBOTTOM

For Chris Higginbottom, drummer in Ronnie Scott's All Stars and Kyle Eastwood's band, it was Blakey's 'Moanin" that first caught his ear. "I was immediately drawn to that groove and the command that he has over the rest of the band," says Higginbottom. "*Caravan* as an album was the one that really got me hooked. The writing, arranging on that record, as well as Blakey's playing, are amazing. He's both very supportive and drives the whole thing along. Sometimes he'll just play time, hardly any comping, then BAM!, he sets up the next section or shout chorus with total commitment and authority. His playing can be very dramatic, and I think I've tried to incorporate that a bit with my own approach. He demonstrates a lot of restraint, despite being such a ferocious, take-no-prisoners player. A great example of being in charge without shouting that fact at everybody all night."

Image: Deirdre O'Callaghan

NEXT GENERATION GROOVES
FEMI KOLEOSO

"I grew up on Tony Allen, Afrobeat and Fela Kuti, so the first thing I remember standing out to me about Art Blakey, it was the first West African-sounding jazz music that I'd heard, even the names of some of the songs, like 'Africa', and drumbeats like 'Ping-Pong'," says Femi Koleoso, drummer from London's hard grooving Ezra Collective. "You want to respect that tradition. I love rearranging songs but trying to keep the essence of the track itself. With Ezra Collective, we've played tracks like 'Caravan' and 'Invitation' but changed the vibe. I want to sound like someone inspired by Art Blakey as opposed to trying to sound like Art Blakey, which is a big difference. A lot of people I watch try to sound like someone, as opposed to trying to sound inspired by someone. 'Ping-Pong' is a banging track. The drumbeat is amazing, the drum intro is everything."

Image: Howard Denner/Getty Images

next thing I know there is this presence standing in the doorway with the light from outside coming in. He walks in and the first words out of his mouth were, 'Where's John!?' Of course, that scared the bejesus out of me. I said, 'Here I am,' and he launched into one of his fatherly speeches that he would give from time to time. 'John, don't worry about a thing. You have arrived. Just get up there and play! You're with me now, so you don't have to worry about anything.'"

The first tune that Ramsay played in the audition was 'Wheel Within A Wheel', a jazz waltz, but that was followed by 'ETA' which was the type of song Blakey called a flag-waver, something uptempo. Really uptempo. "Probably quarter note equals 350 or something like that," says Ramsay. "Art plays his little intro to that and of course I can't keep up. I'm scuffling. Art knew that I was struggling with that kind of tempo, at the end of the tune he dressed me down and launched into his complaints about young drummers of the day. He starts hitting the floor tom with two sticks in one hand for emphasis, 'The problem with drummers today, and I don't understand it John, I don't understand it, is they can't swing!' I'm thinking, okay, it's over for me, but I ended up getting the gig. That was my first encounter with Mr. Blakey and after that my relationship with him became very close. During rehearsals that week I stayed with him in his house in Northfield, New Jersey. We were bosom buddies right from the start. I couldn't have gotten away from him if I wanted to."

Blakey's mentorship wasn't limited to members of his band. He became a father figure to Cindy Blackman Santana when she moved to New York in the early 1980s after they were introduced by trumpeter Wallace Roney. "I used to sit in with his band," says Blackman Santana, "I used to watch him all the time, hung out with him every moment that I could. He had two small children, Akira and Kenji. I used to be over at his house all the time babysitting for his kids." Blakey's presence drew musicians to New York, hoping for a chance to sit-in with the drummer and be taken under his wing. "Nobody was as magnetic as Art Blakey,"

"WE WERE **BOSOM BUDDIES**... I COULDN'T HAVE **GOTTEN AWAY** FROM HIM IF I **WANTED** TO." **JOHN RAMSAY**

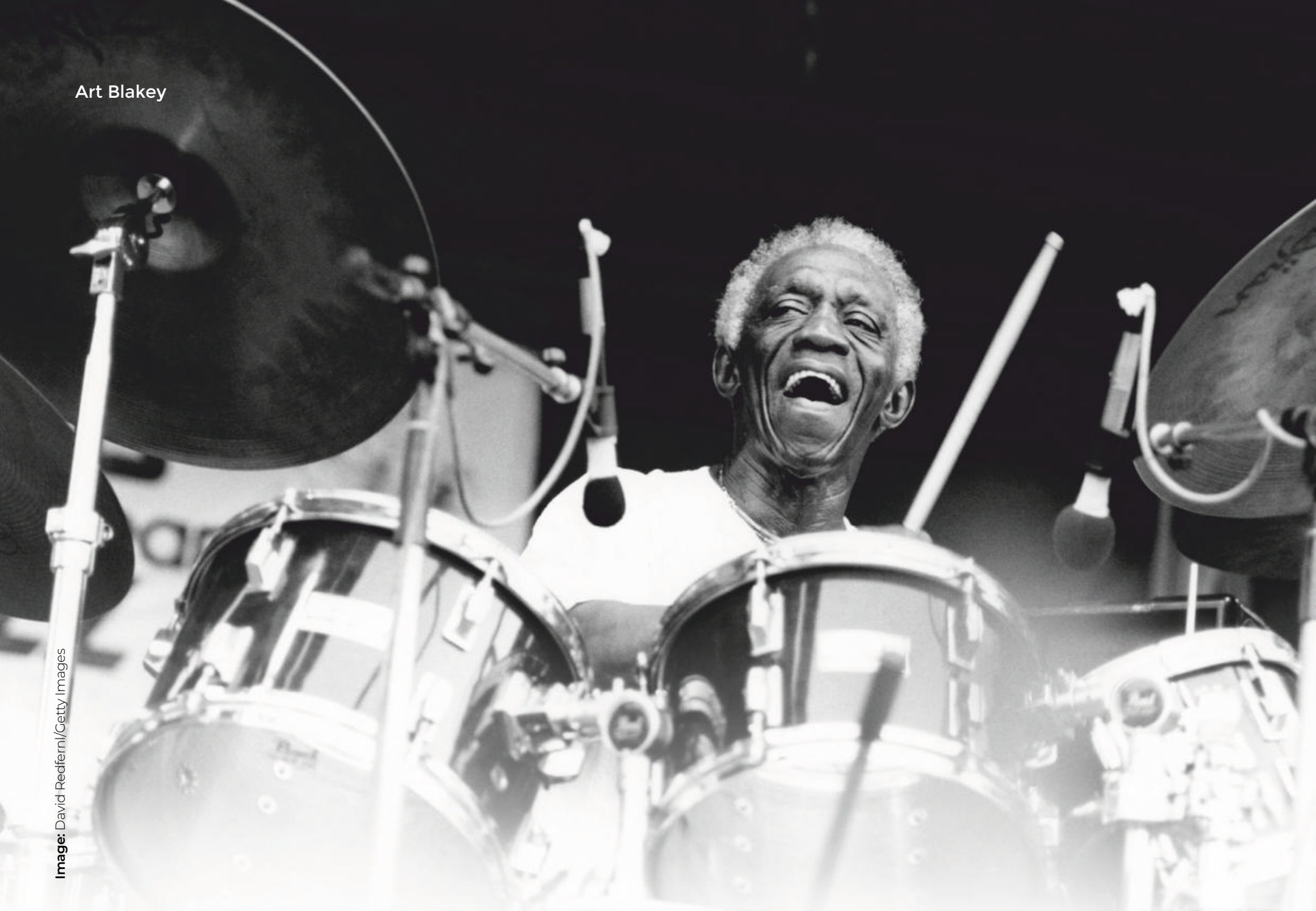


Image: David Redfern/Getty Images

says Blackman Santana. “You never left his presence without feeling completely proud of whoever you were and whatever instrument you played. He was incredible in that way.”

As Blackman Santana established herself on the New York scene, Blakey provided guidance and advice, whether that was showing her how to pack a suitcase for going on tour or inspiring her musical development. “One of the things he showed me was how to shake the cymbals when you’re playing, how to get different colours and different sounds and tones out of your ride cymbal,” says Blackman Santana. “There was a time when I was really feeling stuck, like I was at a roadblock with my comping. He was playing at Mikell’s, I went downstairs on the break and I said, ‘Art, can you give me some advice, I really feel stuck with my comping. I don’t know what to do.’ He says, ‘Go upstairs and sit next to the drums and wait.’ So, I went upstairs, I got the closest seat to the drums and waited. He started playing and he played some of the most incredible comping that I’ve ever heard and every time he wanted me to really check something out, he’d look at me and nod his head or wink. He was saying, ‘Check this out, learn this, understand why I’m doing this.’ I understood what he was getting at each time.”

Blakey embraced his role as a mentor, providing the best on-the-job training any musician could hope for. Then, when they were ready, they’d be encouraged to go out and forge their own path. “It’s time for the baby to go, to fly on your own, and then bring in the next crop,” says Blackman Santana. “He loved doing that and that kept a fresh energy on the scene and in the music. That’s one of the most important things about Art Blakey’s presence on the jazz scene, that he really wanted musicians to develop and he wanted the music to flourish. I remember him looking at one particular musician and he says, ‘Oh man, he left me before he learned how to swing!’ He was watching cats and he would watch what they did afterward. He loved the music and he wanted the music to happen all the time.”

Image: Carl Hyde

> “ART NEVER TALKED ABOUT MUSIC. HE DID ALL THE **TEACHING** THROUGH THE **WAY HE PLAYED.**”
>
> JEAN TOUSSAINT

“He wanted everybody to become a star,” confirms Jean Toussaint, “and he figured, well, once you’re a star I can’t afford you anymore so you’ve got to go on and lead your own band and open it up for somebody else. That was his modus operandi but it was all done positively. Keeping the music alive was one of his major goals, to keep this music thriving and to pass it on from one generation to the next and that’s what he encouraged us to do.”

Much like John Ramsay, Toussaint had to hit the ground running when he joined the Jazz Messengers. He was recommended to Blakey by his teacher – and Jazz Messenger – Billy Pierce, so Toussaint headed down to

THE GOSPEL OF JAZZ
TERREON 'TANK' GULLY

"Art Blakey's groove and shuffle are second to none, the way he swings. His swing has a certain lilt to it, more of a shuffle thing, and his definition of the beat, the power with which he hits the drums," says Terreon Gully. "He's like an institution, you look at the people who came out of his bands. He and Miles Davis, they were schools. All the greatest musicians wanted to play with them because he was just a great bandleader. He let people write tunes, gave people freedom, and his sense of time, feel, and communication. One of my favourite things is 'A Night In Tunisia' on the cadenza, when he's talking to Lee Morgan, telling him to get mad when he plays, that's something we do in church. You're talking while people are testifying. A lot of that aspect of music, unfortunately, is not there anymore in jazz."

BLAKEY'S BOY
GABOR DORNYEI

"Art Blakey is one of the real pioneers, he was a truly ground-breaking drummer," says Gabor Dornyei who plays the Messengers' catalogue as a member of Blakey's Boys. "The first album from the Messengers, from 1947, I got that from a drum teacher in Budapest. It opened up a whole new approach in my playing, because I was 17, 18, I was very modern, fusion and rock, and when I heard how great he played the ride beat, I started working on my ride cymbal playing. The way Peter Erskine puts it is that's a jazz drummer's signature, how you play the swing beat on the ride. The placement of the skip note, that's going to make you sound like you. Everybody hears and plays it differently. Art Blakey and the bebop and hard bop drummers were never working towards perfection. They were working towards self-expression and moods and feeling."

Image: Howard Denner/Getty Images

"THE GUY **PUT A GUN TO ART'S HEAD** AND SAID, **'NO, YOU'RE** PLAYING DRUMS.' ART SAID, 'OKAY, I'M **PLAYING DRUMS**.'"

New York from Berklee and jumped right into performing. "Was I nervous? That's an understatement," says Toussaint. "My first gig was at the Jazz Mobile gig, it's an open-air gig in Harlem that they used to do. I had always heard about the shaky knees thing, when you see cartoons when people are frightened and nervous and their knees shook, that actually happened to me, I didn't know it was a real thing."

Blakey was famous for his ability to lead from the drum set, guiding and shaping the soloists, steering the whole band through his own playing. Graduates from the Jazz Messengers often credited Blakey with teaching them how to structure their solos. "Art never talked about music," says Toussaint. "He did all the teaching through the way he played. You picked up the musical cues of when he wanted you to stop your solo, when he wanted you to raise it up, he'd direct you from the drum stool. He would support everything you do. He knew exactly where to give you more, when to give you less, when to allow you to develop your solo, your ideas, and then when to take it to the climax. He knew all of that instinctively and he taught us how to do that through playing with him. He never discussed it; it was just through the music which is one of the best ways to learn because you soak it up. It becomes osmosis."

While it's often the flag-wavers, the big, earth-shaking uptempo tunes, that people may associate with Blakey, he had complete control over the full expressive range of the drum kit – just listen to his light touch on 'Autumn Leaves' from Cannonball Adderley's *Somethin' Else*. "Art Blakey was one of the most dynamic drummers ever to play the drums, ever to grace the stage of music," says Blackman Santana. "He knew how to draw that musicality and excitement out of the musicians that he played with. He was notorious for starting somebody's solo at a whisper, and then build it up to such a frenzy that you might start screaming. It was incredible."

John Ramsay recalls a conversation he had with Benny Golson about when Golson was new to the Messengers and still becoming acclimated to this new musical environment. "Benny said, 'In those days I was practicing long tones and I was trying to get a pretty sound,'" says Ramsay. "All of a sudden Art erupted with that huge press roll and came down with a big crash on the cymbal and the bass drum, looked over at Benny and said, 'Get up out of that hole!' He said, 'I'm back here setting a fire and when I put that bass [drum] up in your ass, that's when you're meant to kick it into high gear!' He would say that a solo is supposed to be

Art Blakey

Image: Brian Rasic/Getty Images

"WHEN HE PLAYED **ON THE TOM-TOMS** HE BROUGHT THE **CENTRE OF THE EARTH** UP TO THE **SURFACE...**"

like a good story, it's supposed to have a beginning, a middle, and an end, so he would be back there, like he said, setting a fire, percolating, and then when he starts to get busier and louder and maybe use the bass drum more for punctuations or 'dropping bombs' as they say, that was meant to spur the soloist on, and of course it did. He would also say stuff like, 'Look, you're not supposed to build your whole career in one solo.' He would tell a story, somebody said, 'I don't know how to end my solo,' and he said, 'Well, you take the horn out of your mouth, you stupid motherf***er.' The press roll was one of those devices he would use to give you a little boost, okay, let's go to the next gear. And, of course, the polyrhythm things too had that effect of creating tension."

Blakey's facility with polyrhythms is all the more remarkable because they seemed to come naturally to him. "He didn't take lessons, he didn't study orchestral techniques or reading, he was a totally organic player, but his instincts were pure genius," says Ramsay. "Playing with those guys like Lee Morgan, Bobby Timmons, Benny Golson, all those early Jazz Messengers, Freddie Hubbard and Wayne Shorter, those guys were deep into music. Art said that Wayne Shorter would sit on the bus or in the van with no instrument and a pad of paper and write complete arrangements, compose complete tunes without the aid of an instrument. Harmony, melody, all of that, just with a pad of paper writing on his saxophone case in the bus. Even if Art didn't formally study per se, he was in that cauldron of high improvisational music's development. Polyrhythms certainly would have been not only a feature of the drums but of other people's compositions."

"The first thing is his incredible feel, his sound, when he played on the tom-toms he brought the centre of the Earth up to the surface," says Blackman Santana. "His polyrhythmic playing was a key to opening up the platform of drumming. His swing feel was unsurpassed. In terms of his polyrhythmic playing, it opened the floodgates." Blakey had the remarkable ability to layer rhythms together without losing the sense of swing or forward propulsion in the music. Check out 'A Night In Tunisia' and 'Little T' for just two examples. One night, Cindy Blackman Santana was hanging out with Blakey in a club when she heard one of Blakey's recordings with Thelonious Monk playing over the house system. "I said 'Art, the way you're playing with Monk is so innovative, when did you start playing like that?' And he says, 'Oh Cindy, I always played like that. I played like that from the moment I picked up the sticks.' He heard very polyrhythmically, he heard African rhythms. What you would hear from an African drum troupe with several drummers playing, he took all of that and played that on the kit. He was a force of unbridled nature. I've seen him make a stage move, and I don't mean just a drum or some little wiggle, I mean I've seen him make a stage move he was so powerful. There's no mould that fits him, he was definitely one of a kind."

Yet, even with all the incredible recordings he made, decades of touring, and his legacy in the musicians who keep the flame burning, for Cindy Blackman Santana it was Blakey's ability to inspire those around him that was his greatest gift. "The pride in who I am," she says. "Being proud of who I am, being confident in who I am, and being unashamed to show that, to be proud of that and to express that in everything that I do. Because Art Blakey was that. You never left his presence without feeling that sense of pride, so you would automatically stand up straighter, you automatically smiled, you had a joy, because that's what he instilled in you. If there's one takeaway, it would be that."

GREATEST HITS
SPD-SX sample pad...takes some beating.
WWW.ROLAND.COM
Ollie Wiseman hybrid setup / Anne Marie tour
Roland

Gear!

The latest kits and the new gear drummers need – reviewed and rated by our team of experts

Taking centre stage this issue is the Micro Kit II from USA custom builders, Spaun Drum Co. Despite a relatively run-of-the-mill 20", 12" and 14" configuration, it's the fact that each shell in this setup is a mere 6" deep that piques our interest – yes that's a 20"x6" bass drum!

Long-standing review writer and former Rhythm editor Stuart Williams took the Micro Kit for a spin along with a selection of Ancient Art Series cymbals from Turkish cymbal-smiths, Symrna. Elsewhere, Mark Whitlam considers a chiropractic consultation after spending some time with the monumentally weighty VKast Bronze Snare from VK Drums. This hulking piece of metal has a 5mm brass shell with matching cast bronze hoops, contributing to a weight of over 20lbs!

If accessories are more your bag, we check out the latest offering to the world of tone control, Remo Crown Control Dampening Gels. Or for the style-conscious among you, Soundbrenner has released its second-generation musician's smartwatch which features a host of upgrades.

Last but not least, we check out Natal's recently overhauled Pro-Series Hardware which has also been treated to some significant upgrades.

Tom Bradley

Rhythm Gear Editor

Meet Rhythm's Reviewers

Rhythm has been reviewing the gear drummers need for decades. Our team of expert reviewers have sat behind countless kits on stage and in the studio so you can rely on them to bring you the right verdict. Plus we find out about their first gig...

TOM BRADLEY

With an unquenchable thirst for new drum gear, Tom is perfectly placed to be Rhythm's reviews editor. He's not only a longstanding member of our review team but also a lecturer at BIMM and a busy performing drummer. You may recognise Tom as the man behind the kit in many of the online gear videos on our YouTube channel.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GIG?

"Aged 14, I was in a Blink 182-inspired pop-punk band called 'The Dregs'. After rehearsing our socks off, we played to an audience made up almost exclusively of our parents. It was an absolute belter!"

MARK WHITLAM

Mark is a freelance musician who has played for varied artists, from Mercury Prize nominee Eliza Carthy through to jazz and funk legend Pee Wee Ellis. He is currently one-quarter of ECM recording artist Iain Ballamy's new band, featuring pianist Jason Rebello. Mark is a senior lecturer at BIMM Institute Bristol, where he has taught for the last ten years.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GIG?

"Aged 11, playing 'Rockin' All Over The World' by Status Quo with a couple of schoolmates to a packed audience (of 50) at my middle school in the Midlands!"

Rhythm Verdict

The **RHYTHM RECOMMENDED** award is given to those products that score seven or eight out of ten. These are products that, although not quite scoring top marks, are strong products in their field.

The **RHYTHM STAR BUY** is awarded to those products that score nine or even ten out of ten for design, construction, function and value.

Rhythm Ratings

Here's what our ratings represent.

Poor: Sub-standard product	1 - 2
Average: Acceptable but uninspiring	3 - 4
Good: Above average	5 - 6
Excellent: Superior product	7 - 8
Outstanding: Impossible to fault	9 - 10

For videos of gear reviewed go to www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

STUART WILLIAMS

Former Rhythm editor and still gear-obsessed, Stuart has contributed reviews and features to the magazine since 2008. He is now a freelance writer, and plays in a number of covers, function and original bands. This month, he checks out the new Crown Control Gels from Remo, Spaun Micro Kit II and a set of Symrna cymbals.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GIG?

"It was in a youth centre in Cornwall with my covers band from school in 1995. We played to a crowd of moshing kids with curtain haircuts who then turned on each other."

Spaun Drum Co. Micro Kit II

Brian Spaun's downsized kit brings a fresh take on the growing trend for shrinking setups

Words: **Stuart Williams**

PRICE: Kit £695
Snare £395

As many regular gigs become smaller, so the appetite for agile, compact set-ups has grown over the last few years. There's definitely no shortage of mini-kits available on the market, with every major brand presenting what they believe to be the solution for drummers who want a set-up that is quick to load in and won't take over on a cramped stage. We've looked at many different propositions in this area, from Ludwig's hugely successful Questlove Breakbeats to PDP's New Yorker, Yamaha's Manu Katché Hip Gig Jr, and many others.

These all have one thing in common, though – they aim to reduce your on-stage footprint by scaling the kit down proportionally. They have 16" or 18" bass drums, reduced-diameter rack/floor toms and proportional depths. While there is certainly something to be said for these types of configurations (they certainly achieve what they set out to do, and often punch above their size), there is an element of adjustment involved when sitting behind a typical hip/jungle/bop-sized arrangement. Not to mention the fact that it can often feel a bit like you've borrowed your kit from a child, particularly with the constant reminders from bandmates and enthusiastic punters. However, there is another way of looking at the same space problem, and that is to address it by shell depth rather than diameter. That's exactly the thinking that Spaun appears to have applied with the Micro Kit II that we have here.

Leading with diameters that are typical sizes, we received a Micro Kit II as a 20"/12"/14" shell pack (with an additional 13"x6" Olive-Ash snare, not included). So far, so funky? Well, that 20" bass drum is a mere six inches front to back, yep, that's shallower than many people's main snare drum. In fact, all the drums in this kit share the same depth, making the Micro Kit II extremely portable (Spaun suggests carrying the whole lot in a single bass drum case).

Out of the box, we're met by the three maple shells, finished in a natural (almost anaemic) Blonde Satin finish. A quick inspection of each reveals some perfectly finished drums, complete with a classy-looking label inside detailing the handcrafted nature of Brian Spaun's kit. Our bass drum includes a clear Evans EMAD batter head, which we're pleased to see, as well as a Spaun-branded, ported resonant side head which while welcome is perhaps unnecessarily given the EMAD's sonic character combined with the shell depth. The claws are reassuringly weighty, and lined with rubber giving the whole thing an air of quality, and the bass drum is supported by a pair of detachable legs rather than the sprung/rotating fixed kind found on larger bass drums. There are a couple of noticeable blemishes on one of the matching maple hoops, but these are easily hidden underneath the tension claws, which also felt a little dry when finger-tightening, but soon became smooth under the torque of a key.

The toms, meanwhile, are both hung from multi-clamps using a 10.5mm L-rod (not included with our review kit), and while we've become used to seeing suspension mounts on pretty much every kit we see these days, the Micro Kit II uses tom holders mounted directly to the shell. Something that Gretsch employed on its Brooklyn Bop last year, and that we'd argue has a negligible effect on resonance and sustain when we're talking about toms with this diameter/depth ratio.

With the kit set up, we get our first impression starting with that esoteric bass drum. We began with the heads tightened so that we just start to get some tone from the drum and it offers a few surprises. First is how it is possible to get a decent kick drum sound from a shell with such a shallow depth. It's not the 'marching drum' type sound we were expecting at all, perhaps aided by the fat thump the EMAD is well known for providing. Being 20" there is no need for a riser of any sort, and our bass drum pedal takes minimal adjustment to get the beater hitting the centre of the drum. Small bass drums often demand a disciplined 'no burying' playing style to create a full note, but this is again where keeping the diameter standard seems to pay off, as we found we could get comparable note sustain from playing on and off the head. Applying more tension, we were expecting some

"WELL, THAT **20" BASS DRUM IS A MERE SIX INCHES FRONT TO BACK**, YEP, THAT'S SHALLOWER THAN **MANY PEOPLES' MAIN SNARE DRUM**."

1 2

3

1. Slim kickings
As with the whole kit, the bass drum is only 6" deep. It'll stop your singer from jumping off it at any point.

2. Heads up
The bass drum comes supplied with an EMAD batter, which works well in this context to help provide a deep bass drum sound.

3. Tune responsively
The shallow sizes make tuning a dream, resulting in pure notes without lots of overtones, and your playing dynamics are rewarded.

4. Hardware
Spaun's chromed SBR (Solid Brass Resonator) hardware feels purposeful, as do the bass drum's hoop claws.

5. Rack 'em up
The depth of the rack tom combined with the shallow footprint of the bass drum means that you can position your toms to perfection.

6. Finishing moves
Available in three satin lacquer finishes, or sparkle, pearl and oyster wraps, the Micro Kit II looks as well as sounds the business.

4

5 6

They Say:

BRIAN SPAUN
President/CEO – Spaun Drums

Q. The Micro Kit IIs take a slightly different approach to others – the diameters are more traditional with depths giving the reduction in footprint – what was the design thinking behind this?
"My idea was to create a small portable set with a big, full sound. I designed the Micro Kit II with the idea of stacking all the shells into a single bass drum case for portability."

Q. The bass drum, in particular, is very shallow, is it a misconception that greater depth equals a more 'cannon-like' sound when it comes to kicks?
"The easiest way to describe depths of drums and how they affect the sound is "longer shells produce longer notes". The main pitch of the drum is primarily determined by its diameter. The idea that "deep drums" produce "deep notes" isn't correct. They will produce a note the resonates longer. The Micro Kit has a full and punchy sound from the shallower depths."

Q. There are some variations in finishes on the site depending on configuration, is it possible to order the kits in the finishes shown, regardless of sizes?
"I'm a custom builder so I build whatever the customer wants. Finish and sizes can change on just about anything but it's likely to affect the cost. I created the Micro Kit in minimal sizes and finishes in order to keep the price down."

of that fatness to disappear, but all that happened (as well as the rise in pitch) was the length of our bass drum sound increased. While many players would opt for an open, jazz sound from a smaller bass drum, the Micro Kit II seems to excel at punchy hip-hop and almost 808-like sounds. There's attack, but it's quickly followed by a pleasingly round, smooth note that makes us think that Spaun could easily offer this as a pancake-style gong drum in its own right! It's a joy to play, and while smaller kits rarely mean appreciably lower volumes, there's a definite ceiling to this drum's output (at least with these head choices) that we think could be noise limiter-friendly.

The toms offer their own set of characteristics. Once again, the traditional diameters mean that in terms of placement and positioning, it's very quick to get these positioned where you're used to – or, if you've always wished you could get your kit lower/flatter without having to offset your rack tom, that's very much an option here too. Tuning is made easy (both physically, and tonally), and if you've ever experienced short stack toms before, you'll be familiar with the type of response they provide: responsive dynamics and an enhanced attack/sustain ratio. What makes these particularly interesting is that while we experienced these typical properties, the Micro Kit toms didn't leave us with that feeling of playing a radically shortened drum. The tuning is very pure, with a lack of overtones and a definite clarity to our tuning, but (perhaps owing to their double 45-degree bearing edge) we found there was still a decent amount of sustain. The floor tom, in particular, shines in this area, giving us a pure note that died out naturally without any nasty overtones, growls or rumbles. It also made our sticking feel responsive in a way that you don't really get with traditional floor tom sizes, and – as with the bass drum – given the trend for dual-snare/floor toms, we'd love to see this offered with snares attached!

Spaun certainly has a history of producing eye-catching and interesting drums, and while this kit is built for a purpose (and therefore is likely to be a 'second' kit for many), we think it delivers on what it sets out to do perfectly.

CONTACT
www.bettadrums.co.uk
www.spaundrums.com

"THE TRADITIONAL DIAMETERS MEAN THAT IN TERMS OF PLACEMENT AND POSITIONING, IT'S VERY QUICK TO GET THESE POSITIONED WHERE YOU'RE USED TO"

Verdict

This is the small kit that proves you *can* downsize without feeling like you're compromising. The finish options are limited but beautifully applied, and it's priced sensibly for the target audience.

Rhythm Rating

8/10

Symrna Cymbals Ancient Art Series

Turkish delight, or just another cymbal brand? We give Symrna some stick

Words: **Stuart Williams**

PRICES:
14" hi-hats £235
15" hi-hats £255
17" crash £165
19" crash £195
22" ride £275

One thing that a quick walk around the NAMM Show drum hall will confirm is that cymbal production is certainly not limited to the Big Four. While these brands dominate and (let's be honest) have product lines so extensive that between them you will be extremely hard pushed not to find something that suits your playing, choice has never been so abundant across the gear board.

When it comes to cymbals, this is as important, or maybe more-so than with the rest of the parts of our kits. Drums can be dialled-in, heads changed for a different sound, muffling applied, whereas our cymbals are pretty much what they are. Short of cutting them down or applying some tape, there isn't a great deal that can be done to change their fundamental sound. So as the source of additional (and often most interesting) sonic colour, it's no wonder we choose so carefully where our metal is concerned.

Symrna is one such company that is outside of the usual 'must try' list, mainly because they are relative newcomers to the UK market. We checked out the imposingly titled Thunder Lord range in late 2016, and this issue we have the Ancient Art series.

First, some credentials. Symrna is based in Istanbul, it produces its own blanks, and prides itself on using traditional techniques in-house to create its cymbals. That all sounds like a great start. The Ancient Art series is a UK exclusive between Symrna and Betta Drums, available in sizes ranging from 14"-15" hi-hats, 16"-20" crashes, and 21" or 22" rides.

We were sent both pairs of hi-hats, 17" and 19" crashes and a 22" ride to look at from the range, and set them up with a sense of intrigue.

The Ancient Art models are lathed with a fairly shallow and narrow pattern and come in a traditional finish. Cymbal logos have been a hot topic for the last 12 months, and Symrna's is fairly inoffensive – a traditional 'eastern' script-y font as employed by many cymbal manufacturers, coupled with its winged-S badge and a description of the cymbal you're playing. We're shallow, but with so much stamping going on, we reckon these could lose the company's strapline for a cleaner look.

1. Traditional manufacture
Symrna cymbals are handcrafted – from blanks to finished cymbals – in Istanbul using traditional methods.

2. Brash Crash
The crashes are a little brittle sounding towards the top end of their range, try a few different weights to find 'the one'.

3. Smooth ride
Meanwhile the ride cymbal is a very enjoyable cymbal to play. The bow, crash and bell all respond with a nice balance and dynamic.

4. Hats off
The 14"s have a decidedly '70s character to them, while the 15"s will give you a great rock sound.

5. UK exclusive
While there is no shortage of ranges in Symrna's catalogue, the Ancient Art series is only available in the UK.

Starting with the ride, we get a fairly dark sound. It's a medium/thin weight, which means that it feels pleasingly soft under our stick, and the resulting dark 'ping' blooms into a wash as we lay in. It's nice and easy to control, and with the bell being a pretty standard size there's a good blend between bow/bell accents. We find ourselves using it on its own for quite some time before adding the other cymbals to the kit.

When we do, we start with the 14" hi-hats. These are quite evenly matched with a slight weight bias towards the bottom hat. Our first impressions are of a smooth '70s-style hat sound. They're light when closed, sloshy half-open and deliver a lovely warm bark when we open them up. If you're looking towards the rockier end of the spectrum then the 15"s will be more your style. These give us more of that New Beat 'sounds-like-hi-hats' type of feel, with some of the polite smoothness that make the 14"s a great choice for lighter styles, giving way to a dryer, more cutting brashness. They're not fatiguing, but these will definitely appeal if you spend a lot of your set keeping time on a pair of crashy half-open hats.

Finally, the crashes. As 16" crashes become less and less en vogue, we were glad to see a pair of 'odd-sized' 17" and 19" crash cymbals in the bag. However, these feel like they belong

"...IT FEELS SOFT **UNDER** OUR STICK AND THE RESULTING **DARK 'PING'** BLOOMS INTO **A WASH...**"

outside of the ride/hi-hat's tonal family when paired up. They're reactive, and definitely don't require blunt force to open up, but they do feel like they are a tad heavier than their counterparts. At full-pelt, we found these to be the least pleasing of the bunch with an aggressive, bright high end that goes against the traditional smoothness we were expecting. By no means a bad sound, but not quite what we were hoping for after playing the rest of the range, and something that might be countered in thinner examples.

Overall, the Symrna Ancient Art series delivers a solid performance. We'd like to see information on the brand and its ranges made a little more available, as well as perhaps a re-think to the visual design of these cymbals. Sound-wise, they have a lot to offer at a medium price point, and with such a cluttered market could become a real contender in the 'others' category.

CONTACT
www.bettadrums.co.uk
www.symrnacymbals.com

Verdict

These traditionally manufactured Turkish cymbals offer an affordable alternative to the go-to brands. Exclusive to the UK, they are versatile although tonality may vary from model to model.

Rhythm Rating

7/10

Natal Pro-Series Hardware

Natal's heavy-duty hardware range gets an upgrade

Words: **Tom Bradley**

PRICES:
Snare stand £99
Boom stand £89
Hi-hat stand £109
Single pedal £99
Double pedal £235

Since launching its first drum kit lines in 2010, Natal has forged a solid reputation as purveyors of well-built and equally well-priced drum gear. Alongside a wealth of products including the popular Originals and Cafe Racer series, the UK based company (part of the legendary Marshall Amplification brand) has also produced its own hardware for a number of years.

The flagship Pro-Series is Natal's top-end offering. The range includes a boom cymbal stand, snare stand, hi-hat stand and single or double bass drum pedals. All stands are double braced and decidedly heavy-duty. In a smattering of upgrades across the board, the cymbal stand has been treated to a new smoother tilter which is a welcome addition. The boom arms are also retractable which allows them to be used as straight stands – great for a more compact set-up (as pictured). A full complement of memory locks on every stand make for an easy set up.

The snare stand features a mighty ball-joint tilter which locks in position securely by way of a large plastic lever – reminiscent of a DW style system. This makes for a rock-solid stand that can be trusted with the heftiest of snares. The subtly updated model can now be set lower due to a wider leg span and lower bottom tube.

The hi-hat stand has been altered from a two-leg design to three legs which can still be swivelled, allowing for an easier set up with the double pedal. The trade-off though is that the solid base plate has been subbed in favour of a more basic rod design – locking into position through two holes in the base of the stand.

The upgraded bass drum pedals though, do now come with solid steel base plates. They feature black Natal artwork which also acts as grip on the footboard. The pedals offer good adjustability. The linkage on the double pedal, despite looking chunkier, is very smooth and lightweight.

1. Totally Tubular
Tube sizes have been reduced for extra portability.

2. Super Stable
Larger rubber feet featuring engraved Natal Sun logos add grip and stability.

3. Tilt Shift
The cymbal tilter on the boom stands is now smoother than ever.

4. Linked In
The double pedal linkage is chunky yet lightweight. It rotates freely and smoothly.

CONTACT
www.nataldrums.com

Verdict

The Pro-Series hardware performs as advertised and stands up to other top-end offerings. The bass drum pedals, in particular, represent great value for money.

Rhythm Rating

7/10

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Rhythm

Remo Crown Control Gels

The head manufacturer gets, er...well gel for 2020

Words: **Stuart Williams**

PRICE: £TBC

From finely-crafted gaffer tape fins to mass-enhancing full-face mufflers like the Big Fat snare drum and even to opinion-splitting uneven tuning techniques, the era of dampening is well and truly upon us (again). It's certainly not a new thing, with companies including internal mufflers and felt on their kits 60 years ago, but it seems that when it comes to overtones in 2020, the objective for many is total elimination.

Remo isn't new to this game either, with products such as the CS Dot having been a feature in its line-up for decades. Then there are the bespoke products: RemOs (the company's version of a mylar studio ring), Dave Weckl's external head dampener, right up to last year's Sub Muff'l bass drum heads.

New for NAMM from Remo comes the Crown Control Gels – semi-sticky tabs for you to place on your drumheads and cymbals. They can be cut, washed and come in a stick bag-friendly sealed container. OK, fine, it's Remo's equivalent to a product whose name starts with Moon and ends with Gel. Oh, and these are black.

More seriously though, Remo claims that its Crown Controls provide "superior overtone control without inhibiting tonal vibration". It doesn't say what it is superior to, so we're guessing homebrew solutions or rival products.

So what are they like? Well, the pack is rectangular and indeed fits snuggly in our stick bag's front pocket. You get eight gels in a pack (two more than in a tub of Moon Gel), and the Crown Controls are larger, with a width of approximately 42mm, depth of 25mm and 5mm thick. This results in more surface area contact with the head, which should theoretically provide a more even and effective dampening overall. That said, in practice, these are very similar and deliver exactly what we expected, tonally. We've tried budget versions of dampening gels before and in our experience, the failings come from a less pliable material, a lack of adhesion, and the inability to be washed. The real question for these is do they stay on the surface, and can you remove the inevitable build-up of debris that they magnetise? The answer is yes. For many, Crown Controls will be a welcome option. Play Remo heads? You'll probably gravitate towards these. The only, ahem, *sticking point*: we'd like to see them available in a clear version.

1. Rising dampening Muffling has made a real comeback and Crown Controls will be a welcome addition for Remo fans.

2. Sticky Fingers We've all experienced the moment where our gel goes skywards, only to be found on the guitarist's shoe post-gig. Crown Controls stay put.

3. Pack, man The little things matter, and the container these come in is shallow so it doesn't bulk out your stick bag.

4. Four-by-two Crown Controls are set out in two layers of four, separated by a layer of film. So, your gels won't need to be unpicked when you want to use them.

CONTACT
www.remo.com

Verdict

These deliver exactly what they set out to do. They're packaged in a way that means they aren't stuck together and we didn't manage to make them leave the drum head once.

Rhythm Rating

8/10

VK Drums VKast Bronze Snare Drum

Heavy metal, in every sense. There is a reason that many A-list drummers across the world own a Van Kleef

Words: **Mark Whitlam**

PRICE: £2,499

Alan Van Kleef is a world-renowned, UK-based drum builder who specialises in metal materials. This offering, which is part of the VKast range, is a 5mm thick, cast bronze 14"x6½" beauty, with matching cast bronze hoops and 45-degree bearing edges. It is a beastly weight at nearly 20kg so a double-braced snare stand is a must here! As you'd expect from bronze, it has a fairly bright tone, however we're pleasantly surprised as to how focussed the sound is, and that it's in no way overpowering. This changes rapidly when rimshots are added into the mix. The cast hoops have some serious mass to them and really elevate the volume and pitch dramatically. It's no surprise that artists such as Danny Carey and John Tempesta are VKast snare owners, as the bright projection would certainly hold its own in heavy rock situations.

This drum seems to favour medium-high to high tunings and could work very well in hip hop and R'n'B settings, where a spanky crack is required. The Puresound snare wires are very sensitive to even the quietest dynamic playing near the edge of the head. The 'ping' heard at higher tunings now becomes a swampy 'clang' when tuned lower which may fit well in music allowing space for the sustain of the drum breath. Playing this drum evoked the punchy attitude and no-nonsense vibe of Kenny Aronoff and his style of music.

The throw is smooth yet definite in its feel and has a uniquely-designed drum key hidden within the lever for quick access and convenience. All hardware is stainless steel and made in-house with personalised laser etching of your custom design included. The brushed bronze finish juxtaposed against the high gloss lugs looks like a work of art and adds a touch of class. We are firmly in custom drum build territory here and this drum comes with a price tag to match, but it reflects the materials, bespoke design and world-class craftsmanship involved in its production.

1. The shell 5mm thick brushed bronze shell, looks beautiful and has serious weight to it.

2. Unique design A solid yet smooth feel to the throw, with unique design holding a bespoke tuning key.

3. Snare beds The snare beds are a gradual cut of 6" with a depth of 2.5mm at the centre of the drum.

4. Cast bronze hoops These have serious mass to them and add incredible power when used in rimshots. The cross-stick sound is surprisingly subtle in comparison.

CONTACT
www.vkdrums.com

Verdict

An incredibly heavyweight and beautiful drum, with a dual personality, from a studio-friendly focused tone when played centrally, to whip-crack attack when adding the rimshot.

Rhythm Rating

8/10

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Soundbrenner Core Steel

Are we picking up good vibrations? This wearable hybrid metronome, tuner, decibel meter and watch gives it a good go

Words: **Mark Whitlam**

PRICE: €299 (£254)

Many of us are used to using smartphone apps with in-ears for this purpose, so is there a place for the Soundbrenner to occupy a niche of the market?

The Soundbrenner Core's USP is the wearable nature of receiving this vibrating metronomic sensation. It can be worn around the wrist, arm or even chest. Build quality is rugged and finished to a high standard, looking sleek and modern – a step up from the first generation Soundbrenner Pulse. The aesthetic is still no rival for high-end smartwatch brands however, having more of a sports watch look than office wear.

In use, it emits a powerful short burst of vibration which is distinctly more noticeable than your phone vibration alert going off. Functions are easy to use and access, with both tap tempo and selection of different time signatures, subdivisions and options to mark out three different levels of vibrations (accents) of each pulse within the chosen meter. The circumference of the watch and the centred logo also blink in time with the tempo. The free accompanying app also functions like many existing alternatives, providing audible clicks and setlist organisation of your song tempos. A clever feature is the ability to sync up to five devices together, thus a whole band could be wearing them and theoretically staying in time together.

The use of the word 'theoretical' is significant here. We found that using the watch while playing the drums was rather an unusual experience. Firstly, the stronger vibration 'accents' are actually quite audible and could easily be heard if not playing (such as setting a tempo for count-off of the band) or using brushes. Secondly, the amount of arm motion and other vibrations felt from the drumstick through the hand and wrist rather mask the Core's attempt at keeping us on the grid. Possibly the most challenging aspect is getting used to the unusual method of feeling time: we became focused on trying to feel and follow it. This is something that one could potentially acclimatise to with extended use, however, the slightly longer duration of the vibration doesn't have the exacting immediacy and directness of the clicks we're used to hearing, proving an added challenge.

1. Face facts
The touch screen functions to start/stop metronome and tap tempo on the fly.

2. Strap it on
The Core Steel is supplied with both rubber and leather straps for wrist use, plus larger fabric straps to mount it on your upper arm or chest.

3. Quick access
Between the two buttons on the side and the rotating bezel, all functions of the metronome, decibel meter, tuner and watch can be easily scrolled through.

4. Feel the force
The motor and a haptic sensor inside the watch housing gives out a strong vibration on your wrist to help you feel the tempo.

CONTACT
www.soundbrenner.com

Verdict

A neat design and good build, however, some may find adjusting to the unusual sensation of vibration being the source of time limiting to their success with this product.

Rhythm Rating

5/10

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Beats working

Every drummer needs Rhythm. Exclusive lessons from our expert team...

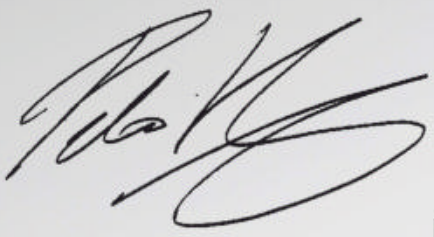
Welcome to Beats Working this issue where the familiar trio of Colin Woolway, Erik Stams and myself are delving into the world of Latin rhythms, looking at mambo, songo and mozambique, respectively.

Next, in 'Four-Piece Fills' Jason Bowld explores some 32nd note groove fill ideas, while in 'Percussion Toolbox', all-round percussion guru Pete Lockett brings us part two of the rhythmic possibilities of the humble shaker.

In 'So, You Want To Play Hybrid' Tom Bradley turns his attention to triggering sub drops, while in his 'drum lesson without picking up the sticks' Mike Sturgis looks at practising and our reasons for doing it.

And finally, our play-along tracks include The Meters' classic 'Cissy Strut' and the eight-minute Rainbow epic 'Stargazer'. Here you'll find both pieces broken down, with key elements demonstrated, ready for you to play along to the 'minus drums' version of the tracks.

Enjoy!



Pete Riley, Beats Working Editor

Introducing our expert tutors (and what they remember about their first gig)

PETE RILEY

In his 35 years of playing Pete has recorded and toured with a wide range of artists from Guthrie Govan to Keith Emerson (ELP). He's also been active in the world of education for many years, started writing for Rhythm in '93, has been teaching at ACM for some 21 years and more recently at WaterBear in Brighton.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GIG?

"My first gig was at a local festival where the band's set finished five minutes earlier than it had in rehearsals and I discovered the impact of adrenaline on my perception of tempo."

ERIK STAMS

Born and raised in NYC, Erik has over 20 years of performing, recording, television, film and teaching experience. He's performed and recorded with artists including Jamie Lawson, Zervas and Pepper, Butch Thomas, Jon Langford, The Glyndebourne Touring Opera, and The Darling Buds. He is head of drums at BIMM London.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GIG?

"Aside from many school band performances, my first proper gig was at CBGBs in NYC with a band called Kingpin. The place had a great sound system but a horrible smell."

JASON BOWLD

Jase has been the drummer for Welsh rock/metal titans Bullet for my Valentine since 2015. He began drumming aged 12 and turned professional at 21. He joined UK industrial legends Pitchshifter from 1999 to 2007, during which time his session drumming career took shape. He's played with Killing Joke, Pop Will Eat Itself, Fightstar, and even Bill Bailey.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GIG?

"In Rugby, above a bingo hall. Grannies downstairs, punks upstairs. The bass drum slid off the stage and the crash fell on the singer cutting his leg. Apart from that it was a blast!"

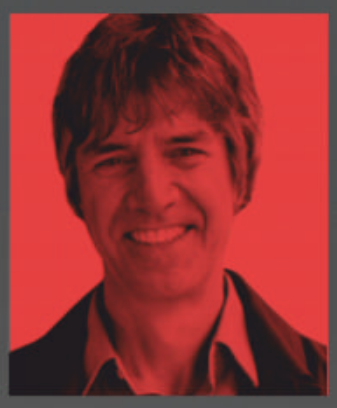
PETE LOCKETT

Pete is one of the most versatile multi-percussionists on the planet and has played a dizzying range of instruments with artists including Björk, Peter Gabriel, Robert Plant, Michael Nyman, and the Pet Shop Boys; and on a plethora of Hollywood films. He continues to tour worldwide as a soloist, collaborator and educator.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GIG?

"Not my first gig but the first time I heard tabla. There was a free concert in Alexander Palace...Totally mind-blowing virtuosity that changed my perspective forever... The pure power of music."

Image: Ebet Roberts/Getty Images



MIKE STURGIS

A 15-year veteran of writing for Rhythm magazine, Mike Sturgis has appeared live and on record with artists including A-ha, Steve Winwood, Jack Bruce, David Bowie, Elton John, Tom Jones, Bob James, Asia, Beverly Knight and many more. He plays with Redtenbacher's Funkestra and The Staks and is head of education for DIME Online.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GIG?

"My first gig was a band called Black Oak Arkansas, featuring Tommy Aldridge on drums. He was a stick-twirling, double-kick monster and is still killing it today!"

COLIN WOOLWAY

Colin has been playing and teaching drums professionally since 1976. He has done every kind of gig including eight years with rock icon Suzi Quatro. He is the founder of the Drumsense teaching programme and has written for Rhythm for over 20 years! Colin teaches at studios in Twickenham, The Brit School, and ELAM.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GIG?

"Playing 'Sweet Georgia Brown' at a school concert, aged 12, with my brother Ian on upright bass. On an evening of dreary classical music, we bought the house down. Our parents were so proud!"

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For the featured tuition videos go to www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Getting Started

Go Latin for amazing rhythms, **Colin Woolway** shows you where to start...

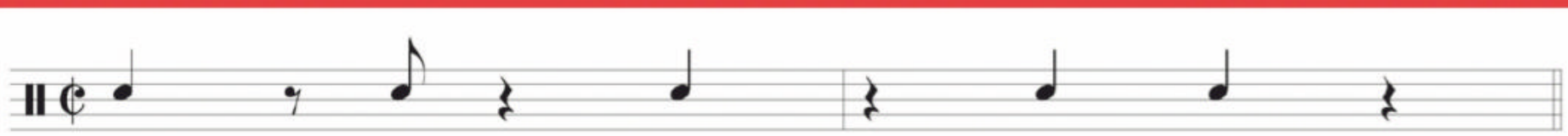
Welcome to another Getting Started lesson, this month we're looking at an introduction to playing Latin rhythms.

There is a huge variation of wonderful rhythms in this genre, and it can get pretty difficult, so it's important to find a good place to get in. I think that the idea of the clave rhythm is a great place to start.

Most Latin rhythms have this clave rhythm as a basis, so it's very important to understand how this works.

For Colin's video lesson go to www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

1a



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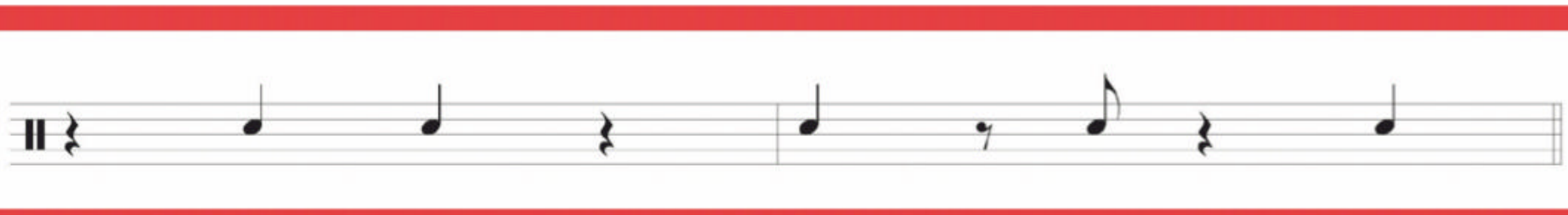
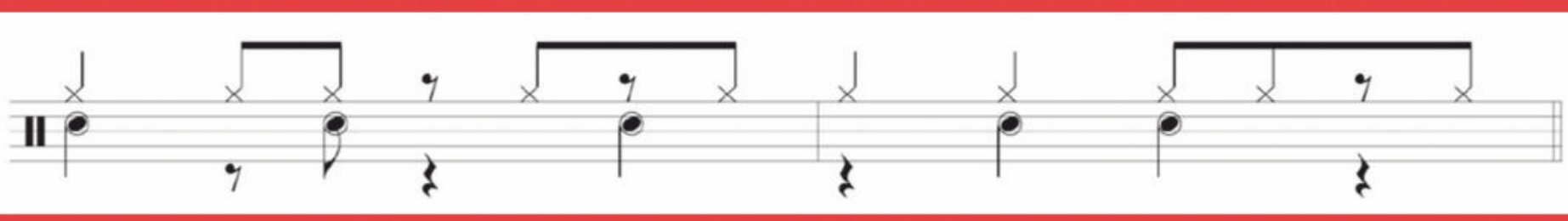
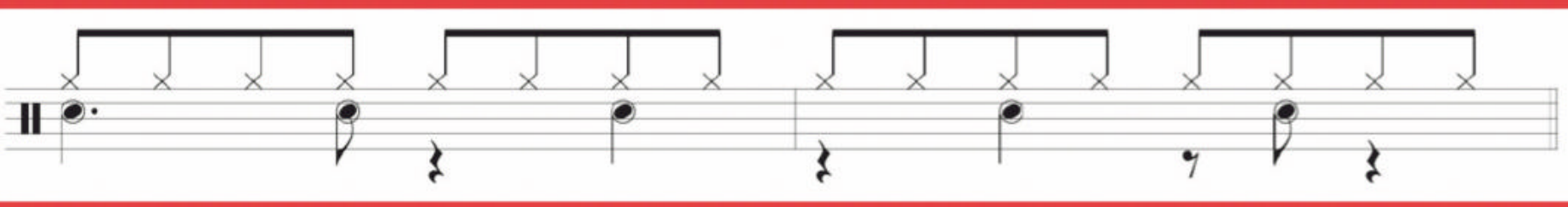

Example 1 In Example 1, I am using the 'cross-stick' effect on the snare to play a two-bar figure with three notes in the first bar and two notes in the second bar. This is known as '3/2'. Example 1 also shows the common variation on this rhythm, by swapping the two bars around; this (predictably) is known as "2/3"

2



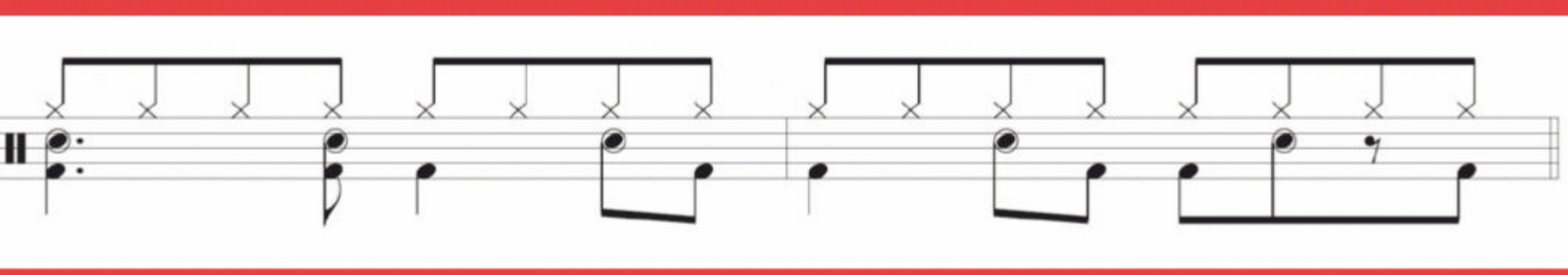
Example 2 shows a 'mambo' rhythm, with the 3/2 clave; the rhythm played by the right hand is known as 'cascara'.

3



Example 3 is the most popular Latin rhythm, the bossa nova. Note the 3/2 rhythm with the last note displaced.

PRACTICE CHALLENGE: Play bossa nova as in Example 3, adding bass drum, played ostinato (repetitive); this can be tricky so take care!



Creative Concepts

Unlock Afro-Cuban rhythms with your playing. **Erik Stams** has the key...

Songo is one of the few Afro-Cuban rhythms created specifically for the drum kit. The Cuban percussionist Changuito (José Luis Quintana) developed the songo while playing in Los Van Van in the '70s. These patterns have their roots in timbale patterns and there are many variations. For the purposes of this lesson, we will simply focus on one.

The first thing to identify when playing Afro-Cuban music is the clave pattern. The clave pattern is literally the rhythmic 'key' to the music. Songo is usually played in 2-3 rumba clave, with two beats in the first bar and three beats in the second. 'Rumba' indicates that the third beat of the '3' side of the clave is displaced to the '&' of beat four. This creates a more syncopated effect. Listen to the melody and rhythm to hear where the clave pattern falls. The clave is here for reference, you don't need to play it. Example 2 illustrates the songo rhythm orchestrated over shell, rim or cowbell and cross-stick. It is effectively a linear pattern. The bass drum plays the bombo (bass) note on the '&' of beat '2' in both bars, punctuating the tumbao (bass line). In Example 3 we introduce accents in the left hand on the snare drum, creating a more syncopated feel. Example 4 introduces a stepped hi-hat on beats 1 and 3, creating an underlying 'two' feel and a consistent pulse. Example 5 shows how varying the orchestration in the left hand creates a more melodic pattern. The extra bass drum note in Example 6 further punctuates the rhythm of the bass guitar. Example 7 introduces further orchestration in the left hand creating even more melody and syncopation in the process.

For Erik's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Heads up

Clave

The underlying rhythmic key to the music. The clave pattern designates the tension and release points within the music (on the beat/off the beat).

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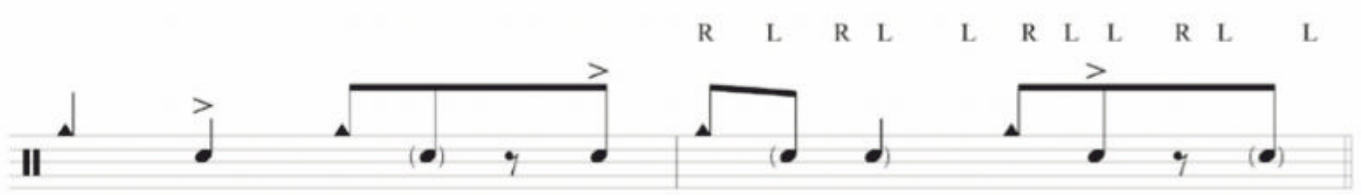
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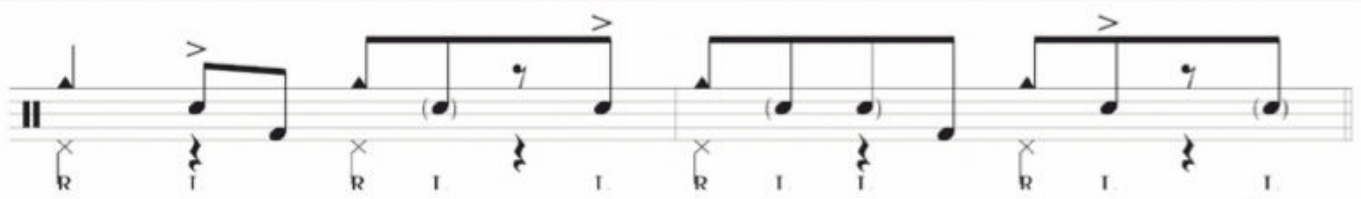
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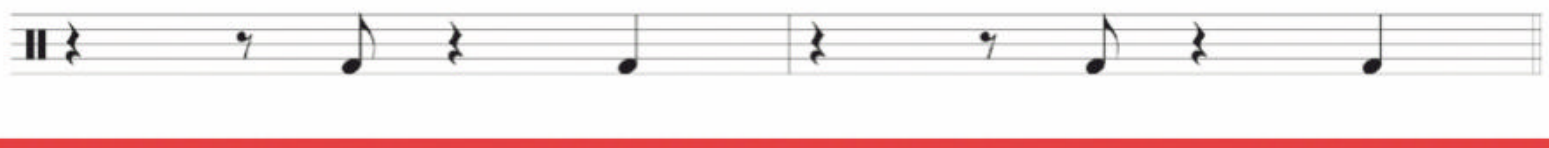

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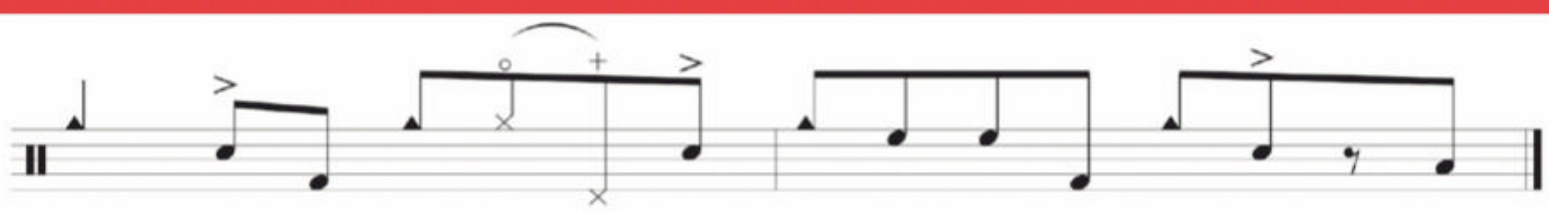
Technical Difficulties

Phrasing using a mozambique rhythm with **Pete Riley**

For Pete's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

The Afro-Cuban mozambique rhythm features a unique syncopation which not only makes for a funky Latin feel (just check out Steve Gadd on the Buddy Rich memorial solo with Dave Weckl and Vinnie Colaiuta) but it can also be used as a rhythmic phrase that can be moved around the kit.

Example 1 shows the essence of the mozambique rhythm. This is the bell pattern traditionally played in the right hand. A useful first step with this is to start filling in the missing eighth notes in the left hand. Next, in Example 2 the accents from Example 1 are orchestrated on the kit using a six-stroke roll phrasing approach.

In Example 3, the bass drum gets involved and plays what could be regarded as the 'pick-up' notes into the accents, while in Example 4 the right hand and bass drum essentially play a swung version of the original pattern while the left hand fills in the missing triplets.

Finally, in Example 5 we move up a subdivision into 16th notes and use inverted double-strokes while the accented notes are again played on the toms.

These kinds of phrasing ideas aren't in any way unique to the mozambique but, in fact, can be applied to any rhythm. However, the mozambique's unique combination of downbeats and upbeats features a syncopation that does work particularly well.

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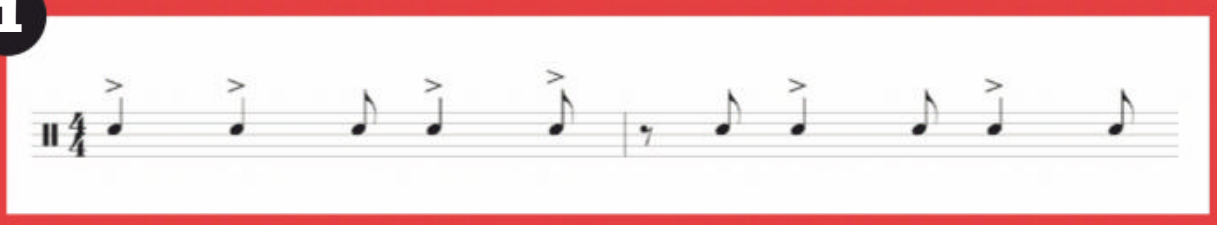
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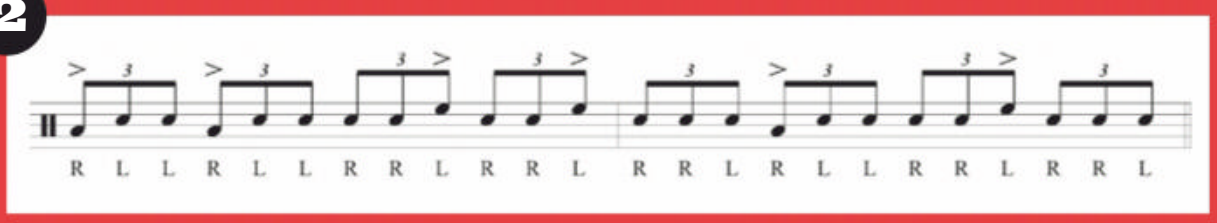
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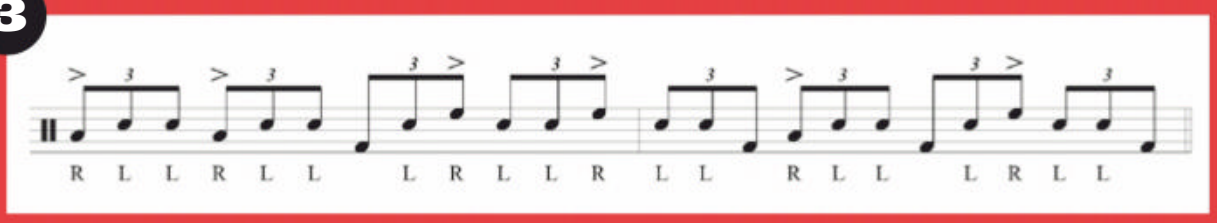
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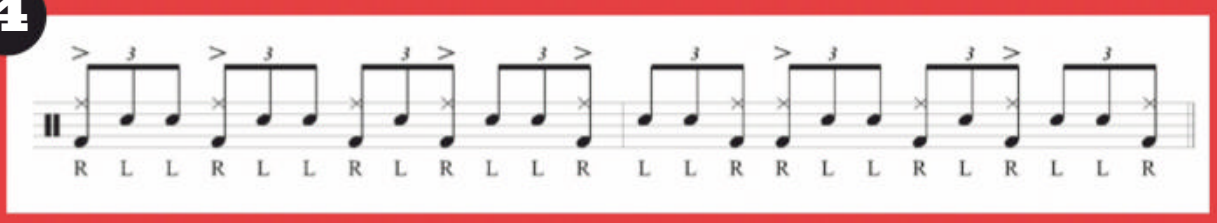
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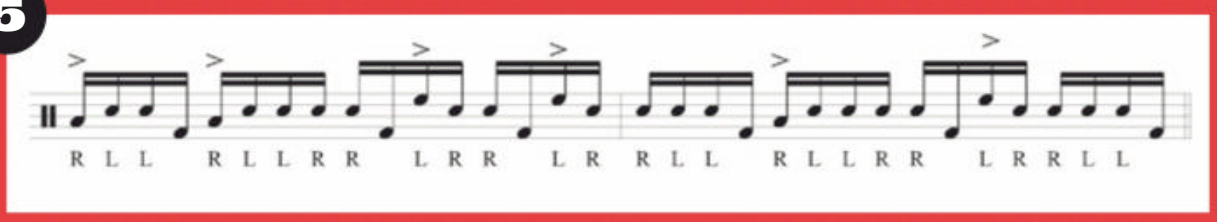
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Four-Piece Fills

Add some depth to your groove. **Jason Bowld** shows you how...

Image: Ryan Chang

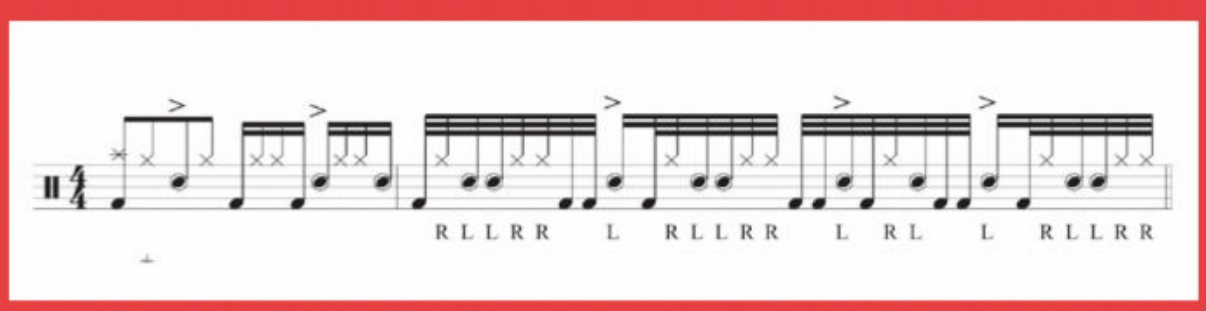
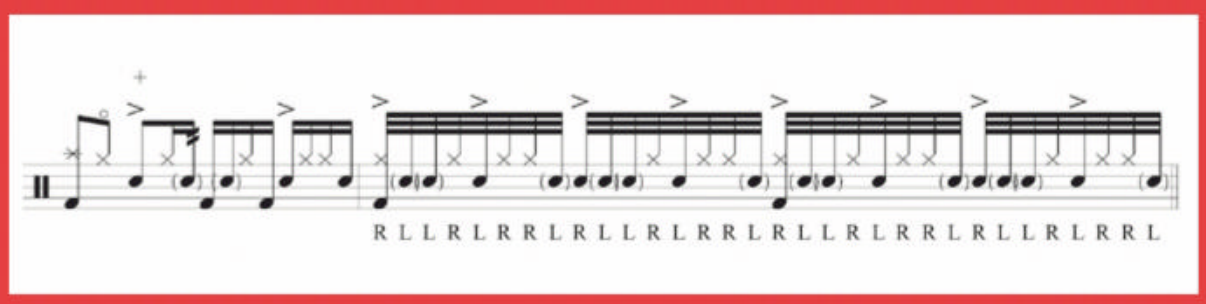
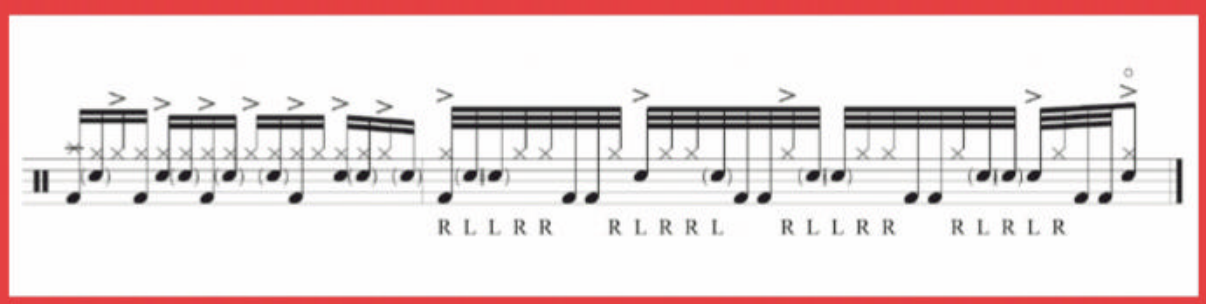
For Jason's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Utilising just the snare, kick and hi-hat this month, I am going to show you neat ways to texturise your grooves with some groove-type fills. The common thread throughout the three examples is that the backbeat will be retained through the fill so as not to neglect the groove.

Example 1, for instance, starts with one bar of groove with a syncopated hi-hat feel then the fill in bar two is unleashed with a storm of 32nd notes played between the hi-hat and cross-stick/snare with fast doubles played on the kick. Example 2 keeps the feel and tempo the same but the fill is simply an inverted paradiddle played in 32nd notes and between the hi-hat and snare. You'll notice that the backbeats are played on the snare with the right hand coming off the hi-hat on '2' and '4' while the left hand stays on the snare accenting the left-hand singles on the offbeats. Example 3 slows the tempo down a little which starts with a laid-back groove – the feel of which is almost mirrored with the fill in the second bar – albeit with a 'slap-back delay' type sound thanks to the 32nd note doubles played throughout!

Heads up

Texturise
I use this expression to describe how the intricate doubles played on the kick, snare and hats give a different density and depth to the sound of the groove. Ghost notes and drags are textures, for instance. The difference here is that these textures are prolonged in groove fills.

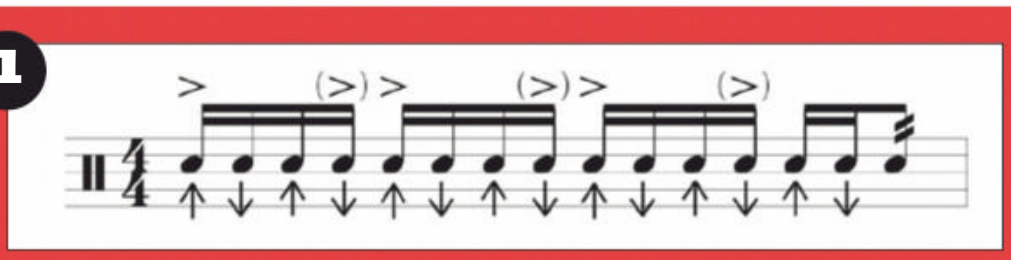
1 The approach to playing the fill in bar two is rudimentary with a linear feel. You'll see in the video, I've experimented with playing the left hand on the cross-stick then the snare and finally with it joining the right hand on the hi-hat. All sound great and give a totally different feel and sound.

2 The fill in bar two is a bit easier to get your head around thanks to it being an inverted paradiddle played four times. This also sounds great with the left hand playing on an auxiliary snare. Or, play the main snare off centre as I did in the video to create a slightly different tone.

3 This example is slightly slower than the other two and is more difficult for it too! This is because more control is required at slower speeds as the muscles have to work more rather than just twitch at fast speeds. That is why practising slowly is essential in laying the groundwork for good, proper technique.

Percussion Toolbox

Shaking all over! **Pete Lockett** brings you part two of his guide to that essential percussion tool, the shaker

This time we will continue our look at the basics of the percussionist's indispensable shaker. We are focussing on the modern 'cylindrical shaker,' which is most often found in pop and rock music the world over. It provides a steady rhythmic bedrock which often serves the function of bonding elements of a groove together, sometimes with an 'invisible' profile. It's one of those things you don't notice so prominently as a listener but when you take it out of a mix you really see the impact it has. More often than not, in pop and rock, the shaker will play regular and continuous 16th or eighth-note patterns. However, when you travel the musical world and hear other shakers such as caxixi, maracas, ganzá and shekere, etc, you hear a much more complex and involved rhythmic approach to the instrument, often involving extreme virtuosity and subtle detail. Because of its role in our environment, we mustn't write this off as a 'simple' instrument. On the contrary, even getting a good basic 16th note pattern to sit in any mix is a skilled and nuanced task.

We will, however, continue our exploration into the very basics of our seed-filled cylinder. Last time we got the basics of the backwards and forward motions. These were used to create a regular and even note flow with some additional accents. We will continue in that vein but will now add into the mix some short rolls. We will start with a short roll on the '&' of the fourth beat of the bar of 16th notes. Explaining the roll in words can be trickier than seeing how it is executed in the video on the Rhythm YouTube channel. To put it as simply as possible though, it is a fast movement of the hand which fills the allotted time space (eighth note/quarter note or whatever) by shaking in a roll-like fashion which is a little random. What I mean by this is that you are not shaking in 32nd notes or anything within the allotted time space but rather, executing a 'random' shake. To do this, imagine you have a round door handle coming down from the ceiling into your upturned palm. If you were to turn that door handle rapidly left and right, over and over then this would be the basic motion. So, with your hand holding the shaker as previously described in the last article, first, the 'pinkie' side of your hand will turn towards your face, then away so the thumb side of your hand comes towards your face. Doing this as a quick 'flutter' will achieve the desired result. Right then, let's add that into Example 1...

1



Now, for the duration of beat four.

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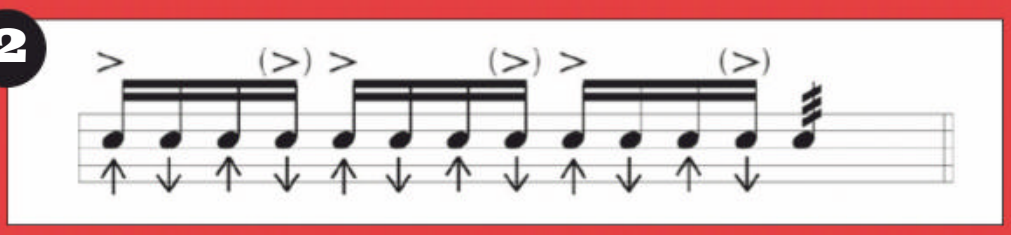

Next up, we will go back to eighth notes and add in some gaps to create rhythmic variety and a few other options. To achieve this we just break up the motion of our pattern a little, pausing for one eight note on 1& and 3&.

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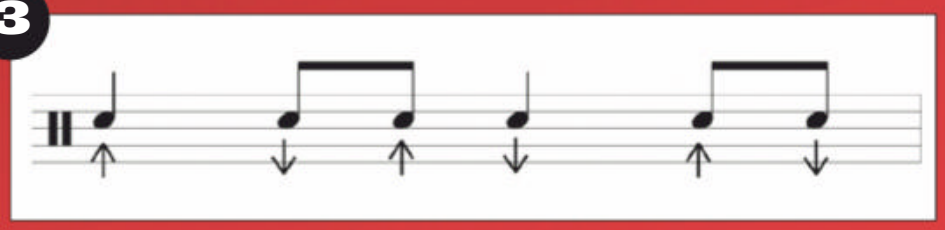
Now with the pattern reversed.

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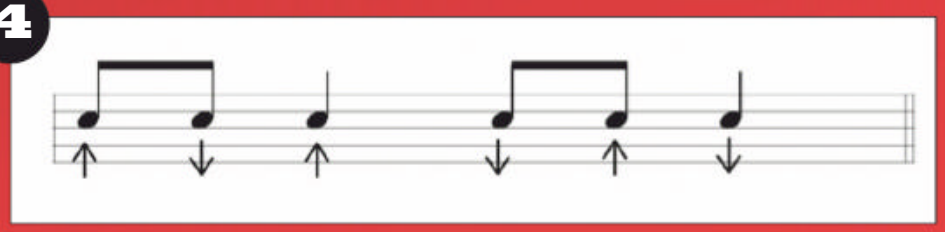
Next up, Examples 5 and 6 show the same patterns but as 16th notes.

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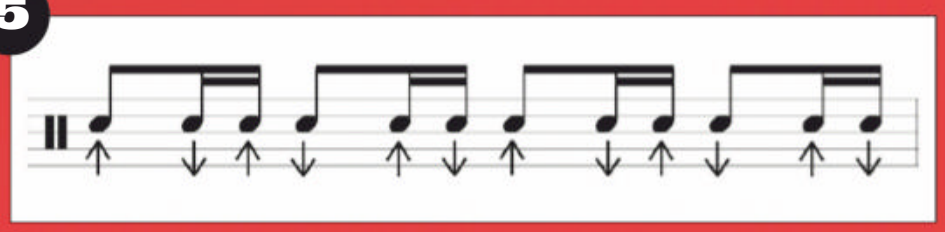
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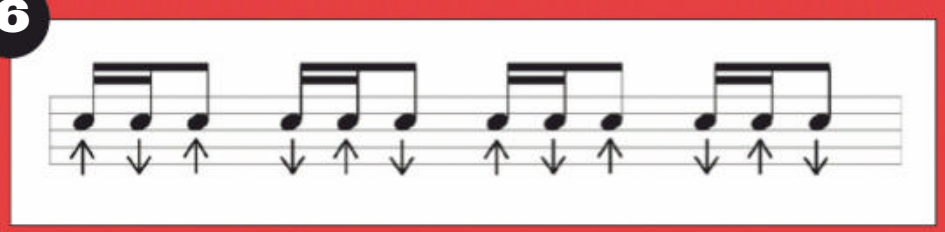

Now, for the remaining examples we can use the same principle to create some groups of three, which we will integrate into the mix.

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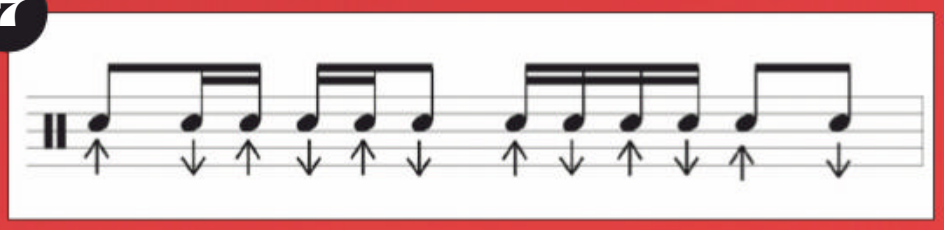

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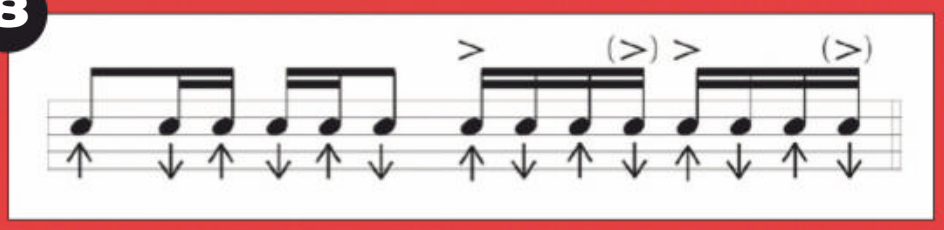

This is just a starter on what is possible with shakers. It surprises me that more drum set players do not integrate shakers into their approach to the instrument. To me, it seems a perfect solution to sometimes switch to shaker instead of the ride for a verse or chorus or to accompany a solo. Then you can build up from there and when you switch back to cymbals, there really is a noticeable dynamic shift. It also creates a lot of space for the music by dipping away from the top end cymbals which we often play repeatedly through musical settings sometimes without even thinking about it. Why? Because that's what everyone else does!

For Pete's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

So, You Want to Play Hybrid?

Perfect your playing experience by tweaking sensitivity settings, says **Tom Bradley**

So far in this introduction to hybrid drumming, we have incorporated electronic pads and acoustic drum triggers into our setup. In this session, we won't add any new hardware but instead refine the physical response of our e-drum gear by delving into the module settings.

The sensitivity settings dictate how hard a pad or trigger needs to be struck to achieve the desired dynamic response. The number of *velocity* layers will vary depending on how capable the module is but generally, the default setting requires a forceful strike to coax out the top (loudest) layer. Changing the numerical value of the sensitivity allows the response to be tailored for individual playing styles. Usually, the higher the number, the more sensitive the pad will become.

Threshold sets the minimum velocity level at which a note will be recognised.

For instance, if the value is set to zero, the tiniest tap will be registered as a strike. As the threshold level climbs, the harder you'll need to hit to trigger a note. This helps eliminate accidental triggering and can be used to our advantage musically. In these drum and bass-inspired examples, setting a higher threshold on the snare trigger ensures that our sample is only layered over the backbeat, not the ghost notes. We'll also use our trusty pad as a mighty sub-drop to anchor these two bar grooves.

Tech Talk

Velocity
Measured from 0-127, velocity refers to how hard a pad is being struck. Quieter notes will register a low velocity while harder hitting ones will register at the top of the scale. Most modules will actually play separate samples depending on velocity level.

Watch Tom's lesson now at www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

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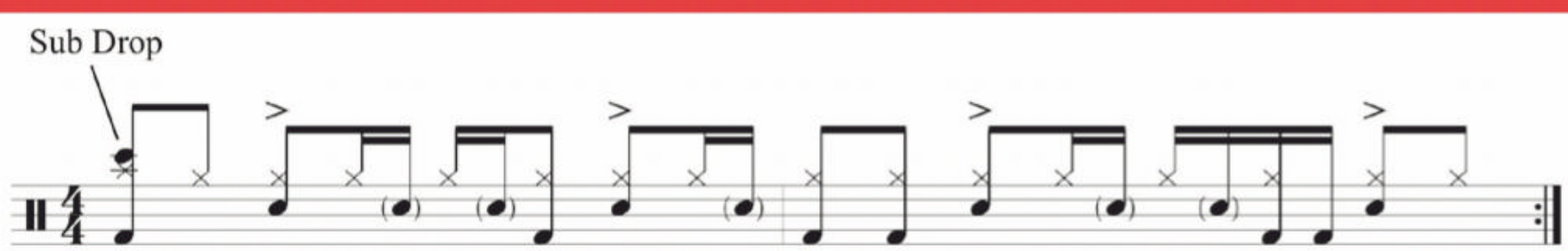
The crash is played at the beginning of the loop with the left hand as the sub-drop is played with the right.

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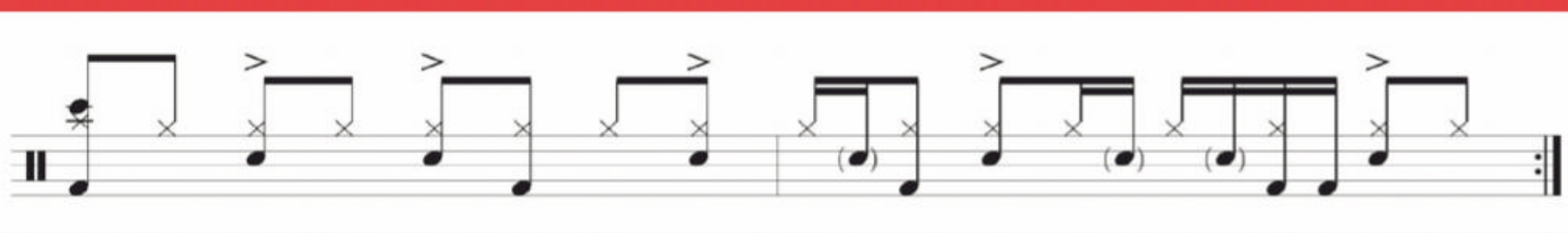
Rather than the standard 2&4, the snare accents in the first bar have been altered to create an exciting DnB vibe.

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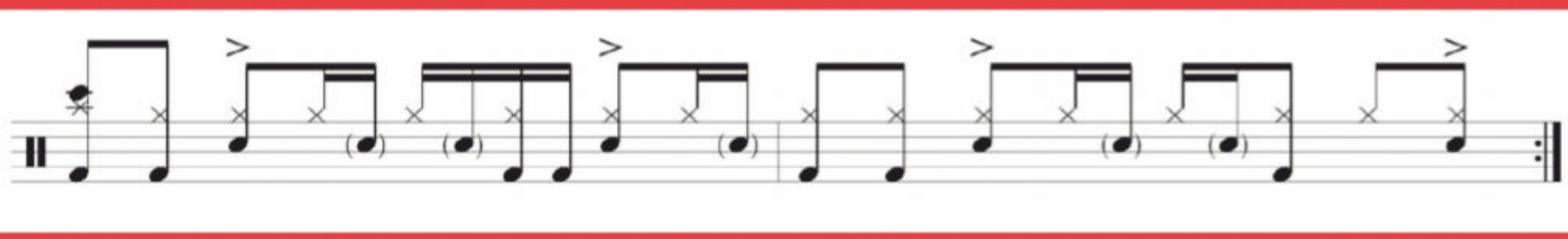
This example is inspired by the infamous Amen break. With each of these examples, the snare threshold should be set above the ghost notes and below the accents.

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How to Perfect Your Practice

Every drummer knows how important practice is but how do you stay motivated and happy to pick up your sticks 'for free'? asks **Mike Sturgis**

I was recently speaking to a great musician and friend about the fact that I was hoping to get a bit more time in the practice room this year. He jokingly replied; "Practice? You mean that thing that you do in a room, by yourself, for free?" While he didn't mean it seriously, it actually highlights the fact that we, as musicians, must invest significant amounts of time practising our instrument for no monetary gain if we want to be good at it. And while our motivations for doing this may sometimes be mixed, the assumption is that you will lock yourself away to practise your instrument primarily because it's something that you love and find continually fascinating. However, is that always the reason we practise? This will vary widely from person to person, but it's possible that your practice time can become more enjoyable and productive if, without being too hard on yourself, you can have an honest look at why you bother to practise.

Two types of motivation

While our motivations for practice may be complex and multi-faceted, we could break it down into two categories. The first is what we could describe as an intrinsic motivation – this is where we approach the instrument with a deep interest and enthusiasm, becoming completely engrossed in the sound we are making. Our enjoyment is not dependent on the quality of the outcome; in a perfect world, we are completely non-judgemental and entirely present with the process for its own sake. The converse to this (and to be fair, there will be an entire spectrum here) is what we could call extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation doesn't mean that you don't love music and your instrument, at least on some level. However, it might mean that your motivation for practice is often based on the prospect of either rewards or punishment. While not without some benefits, extrinsic motivation at its worst can be largely ego-driven, with underlying thoughts of fear, anxiety and the 'inner critic' robbing you of real enjoyment. Your thoughts may be competitive, wondering if you will be perceived as 'good enough' by your peers. Subsequently, your identity becomes dependent on your success, creating a sense of unease and a lack of enjoyment.

A daily affirmation

For many of us, our musical ability is linked to professional opportunities in a very competitive industry. Therefore, it is often difficult to avoid at least some elements of an extrinsic motivation for our practising. There are no simple answers to this, but awareness is an excellent start. Sometimes, just consciously reminding yourself of how music has had such a profound effect on your life can help recalibrate your thinking. For this, you may want to thoughtfully consider the following affirmations written by Ron Miller, a great pianist and composer whom I had the pleasure of studying with at the University of Miami.

Before starting your daily practice routine, read and seriously consider the following:

Daily affirmations

How fortunate I am that in this life I am one who has been allowed to create beauty with music.

- It is my responsibility to create peace, beauty and love with music.

I will be kind to myself

- It is only music!
- No matter the level of my musical development, how good or bad I think I play, it is only music and I am a beautiful person.
- I will not compare myself with my colleagues; if they play beautifully, I will enjoy it and be thankful and proud that I am a member of their community.
- There will always be someone with more musical abilities than my own as there

"LIKE ATHLETES WHO **SPEND HOURS UNDERTAKING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**, WE MUSICIANS ARE LIKELY TO **SPEND HOURS MASTERING** THE CHALLENGES OF **PLAYING OUR INSTRUMENT**."

"IT IS THIS **SUBLIME AND 'PURE'** STATE OF MIND THAT **KEEPS US COMING BACK** TO OUR INSTRUMENT FOR **ITS OWN SAKE...**"

will be those with less.

Reasons to play music

- To contribute to the world's spiritual growth.
- To contribute to my own self-discovery and spiritual growth.
- To pay homage to all great musicians, past and present, who have added beauty to the world.

Rid yourself of the following reasons for being a musician

- To create self-esteem.
- To be perceived as trendy or cool.
- To manipulate.
- To get rich or famous.

For more thoughts along these lines, I highly recommend reading *Effortlessly Mastery* by Kenny Werner.

Practice as a flow activity

If we have awareness that our motivation for practice has become conflicted, we can take action to bring it back to one

that is pure. In his classic book on the subject, author Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has described 'flow' as being the optimal human experience, one where concentration is so intense that self-consciousness disappears and the sense of the passing of time becomes distorted (Csikszentmihalyi 2002: 354). This sounds a lot like what we as musicians can experience when we are 'in the zone' with our craft. It is this sublime and 'pure' state of mind that keeps us coming back to our instrument for its own sake, with little concern for what monetary gain or status we might gain from it. In other words, we do it because it makes us happy!

While the potential for flow in instrumental practice is there, there are some conditions that need to exist to ensure that this happens. Experience can be shaped, and flow activities owe much to how they are constructed. The general idea is that we reach a flow state when our bodies and/or minds are stretched to their limits in a voluntary effort to achieve something difficult or worthwhile (ibid., 41). Therefore, we can consciously design our practice routine to enable the greater likelihood of operating in a 'flow channel'. We do this by doing our best to undertake activities that avoid both anxiety and boredom. For example, if the activity is too familiar or easy, we may find ourselves losing interest; conversely, if it is too difficult, we become anxious, frustrated or even lose motivation. However, if the challenges undertaken are pitched at just the right level, this is far more likely to create a flow environment and lead to growth and discovery (ibid., 372). When the challenges are met or mastered, the conditions required for flow will change and will need to be adjusted accordingly. So, while a flow state in practice can happen spontaneously, it is far more likely that a pre-planned structure will facilitate consistent and ongoing success.

Conclusion

Like athletes who spend hours undertaking rigorous physical activity, we as musicians are likely to spend countless hours mastering the endless challenges of playing our instrument. It is a journey that we willingly place ourselves on, not because it may bring fame or fortune proportionate to the time we spend doing it. We do it because, when the planets align, it brings us fulfilment, meaning and happiness – even better, we can potentially pass some of this on to rest of the world. We have a duty to ourselves and others to do everything in our control to maintain a healthy approach to practising – I wish you every success as you undertake your journey.

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PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

CHERISSE OSEI

"My drum teacher Mike Dolbear sets practice goals for me. I have been with him since I was 15, and I still get lessons from him now. He will show me some Latin patterns and I need to get them right for the next time I see him. When I said I wanted to do sessions, he taught me all about groove and feel and how to practise and get those right. For the first Simple Minds tour, I had to learn 55 songs, so that took a lot of practice! I always use downtime to improve my own technical skills. I think the end of a practice session should be 15 minutes of fun. Play along to your favourite song, free play, whatever you like to do. I do reward myself, after an hour's practice, I will have the chocolate bar I promised myself!"

RALPH ROLLE

"Practice extends your palette. I always practised every day, I used to play on my mother's dresser, which put indentations into the wood! I was always listening to older players and having an open attitude, and I still have it today. Most of my practising now takes place on tour. I always run through my rudiments before soundcheck and after I will get some practice in after the check and before the gig. Yamaha has just sent me a kit and I have set it up in my cookie factory so I can work out there. I am working on my double bass pedal technique. I'm not going to use it, I just want to keep my chops up. In terms of playing it slow to play it fast – sometimes you can jump into a groove and get the nuances right away, other times you find you can't get into it, and that's when you break it down into slow sections."

NEAL WILKINSON

"We all need to work on our instrument and, technically, the most important thing is to nail the basics. That will enable you to play difficult things more easily, develop better time and be relaxed when you play. It's so important to be able to play the way you want to play and to be able to enjoy the sound you make. If you don't, there's something wrong. Practise what you already know until you really know it.

"I have never really had a practice diary – for me, it's always been more about working on what was relevant at that time and then moving on. But a friend once pointed out that I have probably practised longer and harder than I remember, and that's probably true! I used to practise an hour every school day, and four or five hours on the weekends. I was gigging from the age of 11 and that constant playing really helped the practice. And constant practice helps the playing."

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PLAY-ALONG TRACK

Classic Track

‘Stargazer’ Rainbow

An eight-minute-plus classic rock epic

DRUMMER: Cozy Powell

Previous members of Ritchie Blackmore’s Rainbow look like a Who’s Who of classic rock musicians but it could be argued that the line-up of 1976’s *Rising* album was its zenith. With Ronnie James Dio on vocals and Cozy Powell on drums it was a unique time in the band’s history and one which resulted in possibly their most epic track, ‘Stargazer’.

At over eight minutes long and accompanied by the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, the track features an Egyptian theme and builds in intensity right from Cozy’s thunderous four-bar drum intro. And Cozy’s on top form here. There’s an undeniable John Bonham element to his time playing and bass drum patterns but there’s also a heavier overall sound, like with the way he lays into the ride cymbal, similar to Alex Van Halen, but also with the vocabulary such as the use of two bass drums within the hand/foot 32nd-note fills.

Another part contributing to the impact of the playing is the sound of the kit. These are big drums, with Cozy favouring 26" kick drums and two differently-tuned 15" rack toms(!), and big cymbals, topped off with everything being hit with really big sticks!

All of these ingredients contribute to the intensity of this performance, which combined with the fact that this and all of the album’s tracks were recorded in one or two takes helps to offer a unique glimpse into the playing of one the UK’s top rock drummers right at the top of his game.

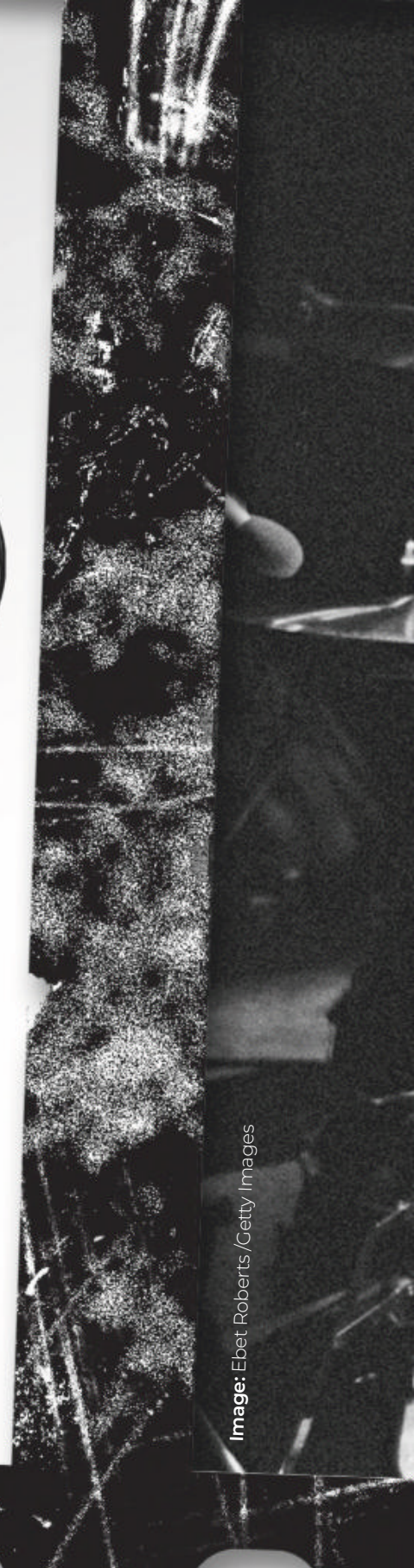

Image: Ebet Roberts /Getty Images

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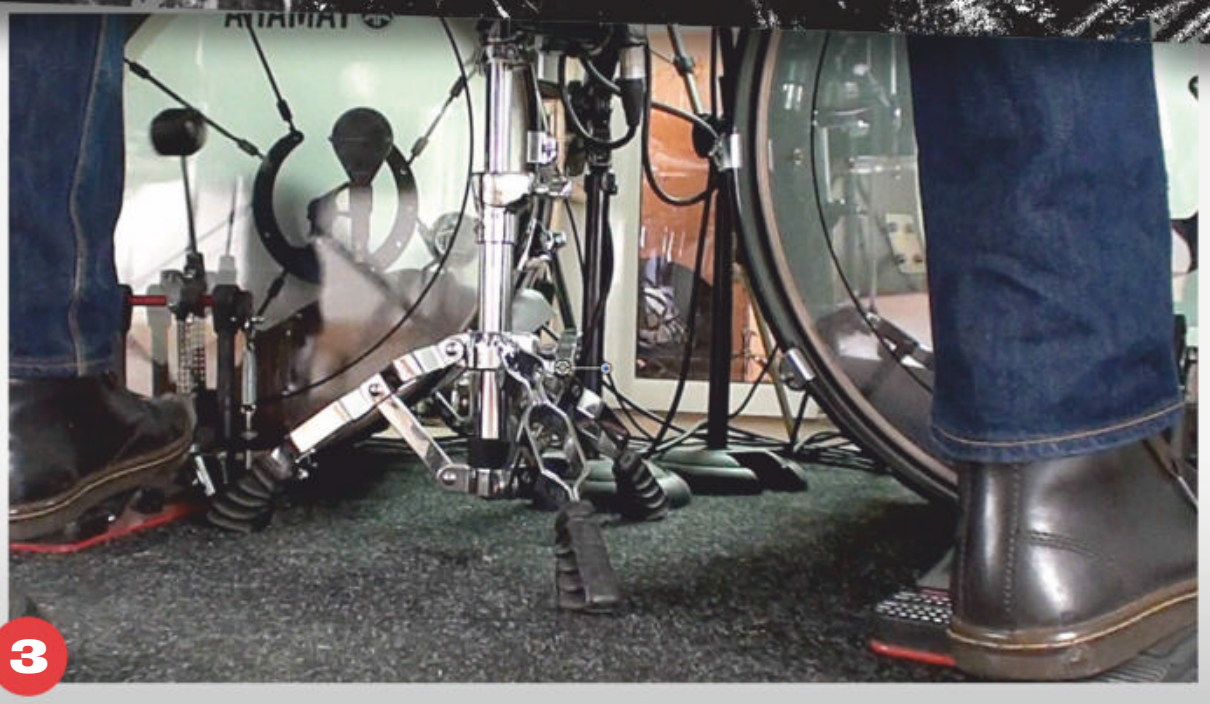
1 Cozy’s four bar drum intro has to be one of the best rock drum intros ever. It features a right/right/left sticking, a 32nd-note double bass figure and open hi-hats on upbeat 16th notes.

2 The main groove is played on the ride cymbal, gradually building in intensity throughout the track.



3

The bass drum features more 16th note movement as the track progresses..

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PLAY-ALONG TRACK

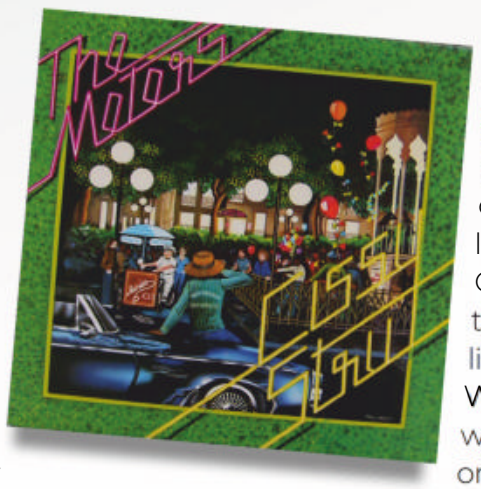
‘Cissy Strut’

The Meters

Classic Track

A seminal track from New Orleans’ funk pioneers

DRUMMER: Zigaboo Modeliste

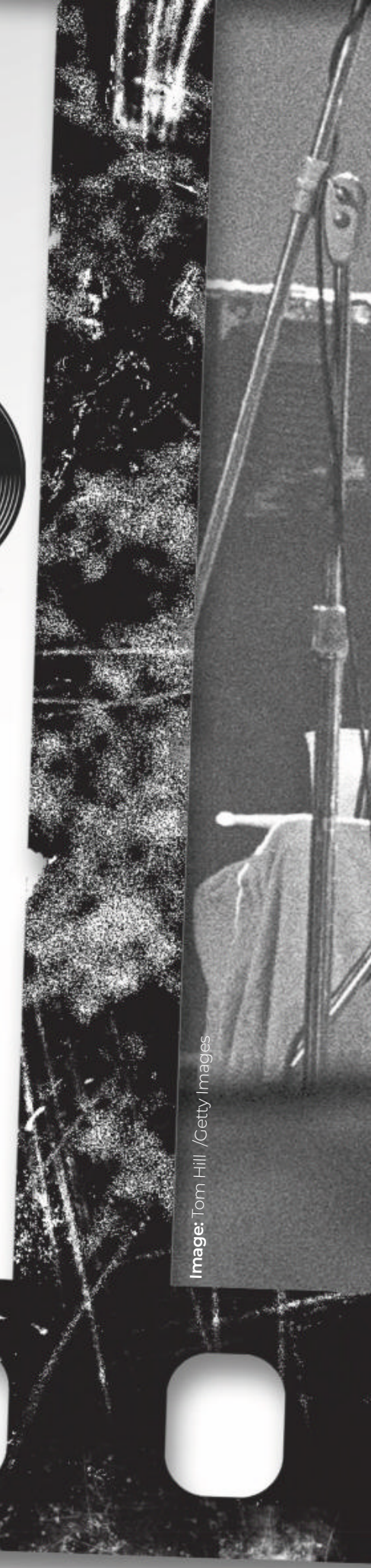


Most funk drumming is based around the three voices of kick, snare and hats. ‘Cissy Strut’ is no exception. However, it also features a broken 16th note hi-hat pattern, in so much as it’s neither playing eighth or 16th notes. And upon listening to the track one might assume that the right hand is playing the hi-hat and the left the snare. But drummer Zigaboo Modeliste actually plays it open-handed, so breaking up the broken 16th notes between the hands resulting in quite a different feel.

Another aspect of the track’s sound is the degree of swing. In other words, where the feel falls between being completely straight or swung. And ‘Cissy Strut’ lies in the funky, swampy area lying somewhere between the two, a feel that’s clearly a fundamental part of Zigaboo’s drumming.

Heads Up – Second Line

The Meters are a seminal funk band from New Orleans who fused the funk sound with New Orlean own second line rhythms. ‘Second line’ refers to a traditional New Orleans funeral procession where the musicians would form a second line behind the deceased’s family. Within th second line of musicians would normally be two drummers, one playin a snare drum, one playing a bass drum, and the two would underpin the music with swinging syncopated rhythms, loosely based around the clave, and moving accents back and forth. These two ele ments, the swampy swing feel and clave-esque syncopation, are qualities th t infuse The Meters’ m usic and can clearly be heard here on ‘Cissy Strut’.



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> “...THESE TWO ELEMENTS, THE **SWAMPY SWING** FEEL AND CLAVE-ESQUE **SYNCOPATION** ARE QUALITIES THAT INFUSE THE **METERS’ MUSIC**...”

1 The main groove is played open handed with the broken 16th notes played between the hands.

Drumming legend Joseph "Ziggy" Modeliste, also know as Zigaboo, was a founding member of The Meters. He was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Grammy in 2018.

2 The feel lies somewhere between straight and swung with the upbeats lying somewhere between upbeat eighth notes and the third partial of a triplet.

3 The B section groove is all about setting up the open hi-hat hits on the last two eighth notes of the bar.

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NEAL WILKINSON

From Brazilian vibes to one-take wonders and spur of the moment sessions, it's all in a day's work for Neal Wilkinson

Birth

Track: 'Hope'
Album: *Gotten Bold,* 2000

"I'd been into Drumtech in Acton doing a masterclass. The studio was next door. As I came out, somebody said to me, 'This guy's looking for a drummer.' There must have been a studio kit. I do remember it being a little bit shabby, but we threw loads of gaffer tape and tissue all over it and it sounds incredible. The drums are recorded very dry, very bare, very in-your-face. It's my favourite tune I've ever played on."

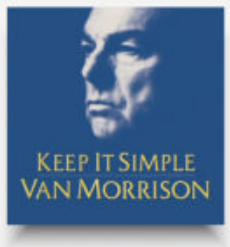
Véronique Sanson

Track: 'Le Paradis Blanc'
Album: *Avec Vous,* 2000

"We recorded it live at The Olympia in Paris. Behind us there was a 54-piece orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic. I'm sitting in the middle of this incredible sound and this song is so beautiful. I remember looking out into the audience, my wife was there with our two sons, my parents were there, so it was really special. It's not a very drummy song, but when I hear it back, I can hear the emotion that we had. It's a great record."

Van Morrison

Track: 'Behind The Ritual'
Album: *Keep It Simple,* 2008



"We did it in a conference room in a hotel. They wheeled all the recording equipment in. This was just one take. It was basically him picking up a ukulele and he said, 'Give me a beat,' and you just play. He's prepared to roll the dice and grab the moment. These days, nobody works like that. Everything is so planned, and he's the complete antithesis of that. We used to play it live and it would be a rocket, it would take off."

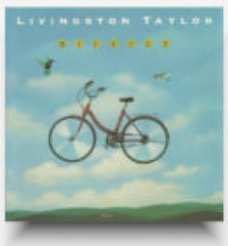
Barefoot Servants

Track: 'I Don't Care At All'
Album: *Barefoot Servants 2,* 2005

"We had the luxury of spending a lot of time working together because [guitarist] Ben Schultz had a studio in his basement so we could sit and play all day. We'd usually track everything as a band, do a couple of takes, and then go and get a pizza, come back, and have a listen. We were able to be very creative. Everybody in the band was a massive Beatles fan so there were a lot of towels on the toms, lots of tambourine."

Livingstone Taylor

Track: 'Dixie Chicken'
Album: *Bicycle,* 1996



"I hadn't met Livingstone before, there's always that moment of 'What if he doesn't like my playing?' I looked through the control room window and he's sitting with his head in his hands. I thought, 'I'm on the next plane home.' We ran the tune through a couple of times, he came in, rubbing his hair, I was prepared for the worst, and he said, 'Well, I guess you know what you're doing. I've got to go into town, I'll leave you to it.'"

Cassidy Janson

Track: 'On a Beach'
Album: *Cassidy,* 2019

"She wanted to sing with us every time we did a take, which is really rare. We were able to come up with our own parts. It's almost like a jazz mentality but not in a jazz context, not having a pre-conceived idea, hearing something and just playing. It's got sort of a Brazilian flavour. I love bossa nova. We had this shaker effect by playing with a brush and a stick and using the fingers on my left hand."

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